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The European Union and the advent of far-rights parties from the fourth European election in 1994 to the last one in May 2019: The Northern League in Italy and the National Front in France.

Can we confirm or deny that the European elections from 1994 to 2019 included within the parties the Northern League and the National Front are considered as second-order elections?

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Two little mice fell in a bucket of cream. The first mouse quickly gave up and drowned. The second mouse wouldn't quit. He struggled so hard that eventually he churned that cream into butter and crawled out.

Frank Abagnale Sr. – Catch me if you can.

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Done at Brussels, on the 24th of September 2021,


A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mathilda Knudsen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years we have heard a lot about the far-right in general. Whether it is through the TV or printed media, whether it is through our Political Science course or even through our duty as citizens to vote, we have seen that the term far-right, but also its components such as nationalism, populism, or discourses on the migration issue, to name but a few, resonate all over the world. At the same time, we are also witnessing a growing influx of global issues such as ecological and climate questions, waves of migration, international conflicts, international and supranational political agreements. As these issues affect all categories of the population, they automatically become national issues and are debated on the political scene. The party system of representation is therefore even more in demand and necessary, and the stakes are all the higher. Political speeches and programmes are particularly focused on these themes, and it is therefore thanks to these subjects that we can, within a scientific framework, analyse the differences and thus come up with trends, political cleavages, categorisations, and ideologies. The far-right, as we shall see, is one of these trends, which includes various ideologies that, as proposed earlier, are resurfacing, and gaining in popularity among citizens.

In order to understand some of the aspects and causes of this rise in far-right parties, we wanted to look at a certain level, namely that of the European Union, and we wanted to see if this rise in the radical right was also present there. After a review of the traditional literature on the subject and a cross-sectional reading of it, we were able to confirm a certain rise of the radical right at the European level. We therefore decided to pay closer attention to it and to see if some of our hypotheses could be verified. Would there be a correlation between elections at national level and those at EU level, but also a similar reason or reasons for the rise of the far-right that could be applied to a number of cases? With these questions in mind, we decided to find out more about the European Parliament elections by looking at two countries and two parties in particular within the European member States. We therefore decided to consider the Front

National in France and the Northern League in Italy. Beyond the personal interests that motivated this choice of case study, it seemed interesting to analyse two parties that have features and links in common links. Furthermore, during our scientific reading, we noticed a number of books and articles about the second-order election model, a theory about European elections. After digging into the subject, and linking it to our selected case studies, we asked ourselves the following question, which will be the central question of this analytical work: Can we affirm or deny that the European elections from 1994 to 2019 in Italy and France, for the Northern League and National Front parties, can be considered as second-order elections?

In order to answer to this question, we will proceed as follows. First of all, we will establish the theoretical framework after having carried out our exploration of the literature. In this framework, we will define the main terms related to our subject of study, which are the concepts of structuralism, political parties, the concept of the extreme right, the European Parliament and its electoral system, and second-order elections. We found it interesting and relevant to use the structuralism paradigm for this work. Indeed, defining and understanding what structuralism is, will be useful for two points in our analysis. It will allow us to understand and situate the second-order election model and to highlight the visible and non-visible units that make up and animate this theoretical model, namely the electoral participation rate, the electoral cycle, etc., but it will also allow us to understand the electoral results of the two extreme right-wing parties studied, at different levels of analysis. And it is through the prism of the second-order election model that we will analyse, thanks to structuralism, the structural units and the relations between these units that make up these elections. Furthermore, with regards to the extreme right, beyond having to define and understand this concept because we are taking into consideration two parties that carry and advocate this ideology, we are trying, through this analytical work, to understand one of the reasons that can explain its meteoric rise in recent years.

After defining and explaining these terms and concepts, we will proceed with the state of the art in order to evaluate the level and stage of research on

these subjects in the current scientific literature. We will conduct a cross-sectional analysis of the French, English but also Italian literature to some extent on our subject of study and identify certain theories and trends that are related to them. We will therefore see how structuralism is perceived by researchers, how it has been developed and is still being developed through various sociological, linguistic, anthropologist, psychologists ranges but, most importantly, the political science level. We will also look at theories on the second-order election model, the assumptions associated with it and the criteria for its application and verification.

Once this state of the art has been completed, and therefore once the purely theoretical part of our research work is finished, we will move on to the practical side and the development of our study. Indeed, the theoretical background being clearly enounced, we move forward on our empirical verifications. In order to achieve this goal, the criteria for defining the second-order election model and to confront them with our case studies, we will establish a quantitative analysis of the electoral results at European and national level of the chosen parties. The historical frame is also clearly determined, taking into account the elections from 1994 to 2019. However, we will first review the history and life of these parties, briefly presenting their respective paths through their electoral results and try to highlight and understand their institutional behaviour and ideologies translated notably through campaigns, slogans or other. We will therefore see how these parties are formed, how they exist and most importantly perdure in the long term since their creation. Once we have presented our case studies, we will analyse in detail the electoral results obtained by each party at European level, year by year, from the 4th European Parliament elections in 1994 until the last European elections in May 2019. We will also take into account the participation rates. In parallel, we will also analyse the results and trends at the national level of each country, focusing on the parliamentary elections of the chamber and the presidential elections. Subsequently, we will make a comparative analysis of the electoral results between these countries and parties. This comparison will allow us to see more clearly the trends, similarities, and differences in voting behaviour. Finally, we will apply the criteria that make up the theoretical model of second-order elections and see whether or not they are applied and respected. If these criteria are validated or not, then we will be able to confirm or deny that the

European elections from 1994 to 2019 for the Northern League in Italy and the Front National in France can be qualified as second-order elections.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. What is structuralism and its application in Political Sciences?

Structuralism is a widespread and active field of study since its increased use in the 1950s and 1960s, and, as a result, there are many definitions on the subject. These vary widely between authors, periods, and countries.¹ The most widespread type of definition remains the descriptive one, which tends to give priority to the terms *structure* and *structuralism* and tries to understand the trivialisation of their use in the field of the Human and Social Sciences during the above-mentioned period.

Structuralism is a paradigm that considers not institutions but socio-economic structures. Indeed, with this paradigm, institutions are secondary, and the central object of study of structuralism is constituted by the social processes arising from fundamental and often unconscious structures. The aim of structuralism is therefore to highlight these unconscious structures in order to explain certain political phenomenon. There are different debates about the nature of these unconscious structures. While some schools of thoughts consider social cleavages as being the major factors of political phenomena, others affirm that the focus should be on economic structures, the weight of history or culture. We can therefore already say, even before defining structuralism scientifically and what it implies, that there are several visions and understandings of this theory. The methods that will be privileged to put structuralism into practice are direct observation, comparison, and qualitative methods. Analyses, based on structuralism, are carried out at a macro level. This means that we will study the structures at national and international levels and not focus precisely on the actors as institutions are secondary through this structuralism perspective.

¹ LEON, Jacqueline, « Historiographie du structuralisme généralisé. Étude comparative », *Les dossiers de HEL (supplément électronique à la revue Histoire Épistémologie Langage)*, Paris, Société d'Histoire et d'Épistémologie des Sciences du Langage, vol. n°3, 2013, pp-1-23.

Indeed, structuralism States that institutions are secondary, that they are not important and that they do not explain anything in terms of political phenomena, as shown by the political upheavals of the 1930s. A political science is commonly defined by being the study of social processes – in the political sphere mainly. There is a new generation of political scientists that arise from a more sociological branch of studies. These say that the social processes to be studied can be explained by the fundamental structures, structures which are often unconscious. So, we must compare countries and regions, examine their fundamental structures, and see how these structures can explain the differences or similarities between these regions and countries. This is the aim of structuralism, to bring to light these fundamental structures, these unconscious social structures that explain political phenomena. Within structuralism, there is a variety of theories on which these fundamental structures are based on. The central idea is that there are heavy structures, macro structures that explain political phenomena. The aim of the researcher is therefore to bring out these fundamental structures in order to explain the similarities and differences between States. How, may you ask? By observing and comparing the cases studies. It is this comparison that will bring out the fundamental structures.

When we look at the definition of the term itself in the dictionaries, the Larousse, the Collins and the Cambridge (the three online) in this case, it is defined as follows:

- « Théorie selon laquelle l'étude d'une catégorie de faits (notamment en sciences humaines) doit envisager principalement les structures. Courant de pensée des années 1960, visant à privilégier d'une part la totalité par rapport à l'individu, d'autre part la synchronicité des faits plutôt que leur évolution, et enfin les relations qui unissent ces faits plutôt que les faits eux-mêmes dans leur caractère hétérogène et anecdotique. » ²

² Larousse, (s.d.), *Structuralisme*, dans Larousse en ligne, consultée le 4 septembre 2021 sur <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/structuralisme/74914>

- « Structuralism is a method of interpreting and analysing such things as language, literature, and society, which focuses on contrasting ideas or elements of structure and attempts to show how they relate to the whole structure. »³
- « a way of studying human culture, for example language, literature, art, or anthropology, that emphasizes the importance of its basic structures and the relationships between its parts. »⁴

When we analyse these definitions, we can already see that the principle of structuralism is applied to the definition of the term itself. Indeed, it is defined as a process, a theory that allows us to highlight the links and the actions that take place between the different parts that compose a whole. And what we would like to say is that, when defining the concept of structuralism, we define what makes up this theory, namely the use of the term, the nature and origin of the word and what it implies. Thus, we can consider that, as Jean Pouillon said, « structuralism consists in seeing, in every reality, a case whose declension rule must be discovered, as in grammar ».⁵

In his conception of what structuralism is, Alexis Cartonnet proposes that structuralism proceeds by cutting up an abstract and arbitrary whole into several elements that are intended to fit together. He explains this theory in the following way, arguing that the preliminary operation of structuralism consists of a « cutting up of units. »⁶ These famous « cut-up units », described by Roland Barthes but brought in by Roman Jakobson, are explicable through three axioms. The first axiom establishes « the anteriority of relations over the terms of the relation and therefore the precedence of the whole over the parts »⁷. Indeed, according to the author, everything begins with the structure, configuration, or relationship in which this object under study is born and grows. This is what he

³ Collins, *Structuralism*, in Collins online, page consulted on the September 9 of 2021 on <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/structuralism#:~:text=structuralism%20in%20British%20English&text=1.,mental%20characteristics%20or%20organizing%20principles>

⁴ Cambridge dictionary, *Structuralism*, in Cambridge dictionary online, page consulted on the September 9 of 2021 on <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/structuralism>

⁵ POUILLON, Jean. « Le Structuralisme Aujourd'hui. », *L'Homme*, n°164, 2002, pp. 9–16.

⁶ BARTHES, R., *Essais critiques*, ouvr. cité, p. 224. In CARTONNET, Alexis, « Structuralisme et néoréalisme dans le champ des relations internationales. Le cas de Kenneth Waltz », *Astérion*, septembre 2011, 1p.

⁷ DERRIDA, Jacques, *L'écriture et la différence*, Paris, Seuil, 1967, p. 419.

calls the *systemic dimension* of structuralism. What comes first, then, is the whole, the totality of the structure before the unit, before the object studied, the element considered. He concludes that the units considered one by one take their « raison d'être » from what holds them together, such as the European Union for its member States or the family for its members. Claude Lévi-Strauss confirms this thought by saying, in a simple way, that « the fact of the structure is primary»⁸. The second axiom will allow us to define the units that constitute a structure according to their spatial positions. Indeed, since these do not differ in character or content, it is their position and thus, the topographical dimension of structuralism, that we will address in this second point. Gilles Gaston Granger maintains, in *Pensée formelle et sciences de l'Homme*⁹, that the difference between these units composing the structure comes exclusively and always from their positioning and not from what constitutes them. Finally, with regard to the third axiom, it consists in the exchange of place and order of these units within their own system. This is the dynamic dimension of structuralism. And it is this criterion that will be the most decisive since it is the meeting point between a permutation rule and the treatment and properties of these units that will allow us to be sure that an analysis can be carried out under the prism of structuralism. And so, conversely, when there is no possibility of establishing a combination of units, there is no structuralism possible.¹⁰

In order to summarise what has been stated above, we can say that the paradigm of structuralism articulates the elements housed in a spatial set (units) whose action is based on a system of permutation and this corresponds to the three axioms: axiom of relation, axiom of position and axiom of permutation. This definition also allows the harmonisation of the field of structuralist studies but decides to voluntarily put aside the assembly of pro- and anti-structuralist debates.

If we refer to the definition and distinctions made within this theory, it is interesting to take François Dosse as a reference. In fact, in his two-volume work *History of Structuralism*, the author proposes to establish the tendencies that

⁸ LEVI-STRAUSS, Claude, « L'homme nu », *Mythologiques IV*, Plon, Paris, 1971, p. 561.

⁹ ROLLE, Pierre et GRANGER, Gilles-Gaston, « Pensée formelle et sciences de l'homme. ». In: *Revue française de sociologie*, 1961, 2-4. pp. 323-324.

¹⁰ CARTONNET, Alexis, « Structuralisme et néoréalisme dans le champ des relations internationales. Le cas de Kenneth Waltz », *Astérian*, septembre 2011, 1p.

animate this concept. On the one hand, there is a scientific structuralism, represented essentially by Levi-Strauss. On the other hand, there is a moderate structuralism in the field of literary analysis, with Michel Serres and Roland Barthes in particular. Finally, an historicised and more philosophical structuralism brought by Bourdieu or Foucault, to name but a few. Through his works, François Dosse will define and categorise structuralism by period, basing himself, for each, on the great masters of structuralist thinkers. Dosse can be classified in the category of thinkers defining structuralism in a generalized way and thus focusing on the commonplace use of the term itself.

Finally, as we have been able to see from the various theoretical courses on political science research that we have had the benefit of during our years of study, structuralism is used to counter the anomalies and defects of classical institutionalism. Indeed, contrary to this school of thought, structuralism will put aside the study of institutions which, according to it, do not allow us to understand political science. It is in fact the social structures that animate the institutions that make it possible to explain the phenomena of the political world. As a result, structuralism is made up of a variety of interests and rather diverse internal theories. We can mention the social cleavages with Marxism and the class struggle; the economic structures in which democratisation can depend on the economic development of a country; the weight of history with, in particular, Lipset and Rokkan exposing the theory of social cleavages which would be inherited from History (a theory developed in the second half of the 1960s that exposes the four cleavages which structure Western society after the industrial revolution. There is mainly the centre-periphery division, State-Church, owners-workers, industrial-rural)¹¹; and, finally, the cultural division exposed by Weber who will take this aspect as the cause of certain political processes such as the capitalist transition. There are therefore macro structures that make it possible to explain the differences between States through direct observation, comparison of cases or qualitative surveys.

¹¹ FROGNIER, André-Paul, « Application du modèle de Lipset et Rokkan à la Belgique », *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2007, p281.

The definition and understanding of structuralism will be useful for two things in our present analysis. The first being that it will allow us to understand and situate this concept in the state of the art. The second is that it will allow us to understand the interest of taking this approach into account in our research work. Indeed, structuralism is not chosen by chance in this framework, since what we are studying and trying to understand in this research is what explains the electoral results of the extreme right-wing parties, the National Front in France and the Northern League in Italy, in the European Parliamentary elections. And, through the prism of the second-order election model, we will analyse the structural units of these elections, the invisible and abstract units that confirm or refute our research question.

B. The political party and its features

There is an important amount of research on political parties and what defines a political party, how it can precisely be described and defined. Indeed, defining a political party is not an easy task and the term can be defined in many ways. Today, most studies today focus mainly on the doctrines attached to political parties. Indeed, this orientation stems from the liberal notion of the party, which considers this object as a set of ideologies. In 1816, Benjamin Constant defined the party as « a meeting of men who profess the same political doctrine ». ¹² It was after this liberal view that the Marxist conception of the party took its place and steered the studies and research on the issue towards a different path. Reference is now made to the links between standards of living, occupation, the education system, or political and ideological affiliation. ¹³

If we consider the classical definition of two dictionaries, the party is defined as follows:

- Groupe de personnes réunies par une communauté d'opinions, d'intérêts. Organisation structurée dont les membres mènent une action collective dans la société aux fins de réaliser un programme politique. Choix à faire, résolution à

¹² DREYFUS, Françoise (dir.), « Nouveaux partis, nouveaux enjeux », Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2000, p58.

¹³ DUVERGER, Maurice, « Les partis politiques », dans : , *Les partis politiques*. sous la direction de Duverger Maurice. Paris, Le Seuil, « Points », 1981, pp.17-22.

prendre pour agir. Ensemble de choix faits par l'artiste quant aux caractères essentiels d'une œuvre.¹⁴

- An organisation of people who share the same views about the way power should be used in a country or society (through government, policymaking, etc.)¹⁵

Considering two definitions from two dictionaries, we can already see that the term is defined in very different ways and that it has several meanings. However, we will focus on finding a definition of the concept from the perspective of political science and international relations. The function of a party is to assume governmental representation and to make political decisions in order to control and govern the future of a society. The party is thus an actor in the decision-making process of a nation.¹⁶ The most commonly used definition is the one provided by philosophers Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner in 1966, that considers political parties to be « a sustainable organisation: that is, an organisation whose political life expectancy is longer than that of its leaders. It is a well-established and apparently durable local organisation with regular and varied relationships at the national or supranational level. It is therefore the deliberate will of the organisation's national and local leaders to take and exercise power, alone and/or with others, and not simply to influence power. Finally, it is the concern to seek popular support through elections or in any other way. »¹⁷

Daniel-Louis Seiler offers a definition that could be described as more comprehensive and precise in his work on political parties in Europe. He considers parties to be « organisations that aim to mobilise individuals in collective action against other similarly mobilised actions in order to gain access, alone or in coalition, to the exercise of governmental functions. This collective action and claim to control public affairs are justified by a particular conception of the general interest. »¹⁸ Moreover, he exposes one of the etymological points of view where we can see that the word party comes from ancient French verb «

¹⁴ Larousse, (s.d.), *Parti politique*, dans Larousse en ligne, consultée le 11 septembre 2021 sur <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/parti/58364>

¹⁵ Collins, (s.d.), *Political Party*, in Collins online, consulted on the septembre 11 of 2021 on <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/political-party>

¹⁶ SEILER, Daniel-Louis, « la politique comparée », Paris, Armand Colin, « Collection U », 1982, p45.

¹⁷ DELWITE, Pascal, « Introduction à la science politique », Bruxelles, 2^{ème} édition, Université libre de Bruxelles, p.34.

¹⁸ SEILER, Daniel-Louis, « la politique comparée », p28.

partir » that meant to divide, to allocate. In his book *Clivages et familles politiques en Europe*, he first sets out Martin Lipset's and Stein Rokkan's views of parties as both « agents of conflict and instruments of its integration, their « raison d'être », and therefore their nature, to be found in the fundamental political cleavages that gave rise to them. »¹⁹ He also takes up the definition provided by Edmund Burke in 1770 and brought to the fore in 1960 by Ann Arbor, which states « Party is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. »²⁰ Burke therefore proposes a definition that focuses on the party as an organisation but above all, as a concept of the general interest that generates trends.

In addition, it is important to emphasise that public policy-making is not the only objective of parties. Indeed, parties are more complex organisations through which members, supporters, and activists, may have different interests. Thus, depending on the strength of the party's internal or external relationships and the role it plays in the party system, it may choose to pursue these public policies, in which case it will be a « policy-seeker » type, but it may also opt for a goal other than maximising the number of government posts, in which case it will be an « office-seeker » type. Finally, it may focus its operating mechanism on electoral success and the accumulation of votes. In this case, we speak of a « vote-seeker » party. Through their struggle for power, parties « legitimise and define the space of politics, distinguish and distinguish themselves », as Offerlé (2002) points out in his writings.²¹ In these, this author proposes the definition of La Palombara and Weiner, which he describes as restrictive, and which would make it possible to differentiate between the various types of parties. Those that do not have a label other than the emblem of their leader's name (such as the National Front (NF), for example, and the name Le Pen, to which the party is totally assimilated) or those that do not have sufficient local or regional

¹⁹ SEILER, Daniel-Louis, *Clivages et familles politiques en Europe*, Bruxelles, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2011, p7.

²⁰ BURKE, Edmund, « thoughts on the cause of the present discontents », in Id., ARBOR, Ann, *The philosophy of Edmund Burke*, the University of Michigan press, 1960, p134.

²¹ BOUSSAGUET, L., JACQUOT, S., RAVINET, P., *Dictionnaire des politiques publiques*, 5^{ème} édition, Paris, Les Presses de SciencesPo, 2019, p.538

branches.²² He points out that parties have a collective or personalised attribute (such as the NF) that often suits their members. He maintains that this type of party claims to provide THE definition of a party when in fact they provide only ONE of the modalities, among many existing ones, determined by History. It is therefore necessary to take into account, when asking the question of what a political party is, the premises of parties as a set of specific repertoires of action, to keep involving the past and the limits to the frontier between what is and what is not a party. It is then interesting, when talking about the abstract or concrete benefits obtained as a result of the labelling of the structure, to take the evolution of the qualifiers of the NF. Indeed, this party has been renamed during its existence – process that will be better explained further – but has also been characterised as a « movement », a « small group », or « Jean-Marie Le Pen's formation » throughout its history. And this labelling is now threatened by the current « bleu Marine » wave. However, this perception of the party has been strongly questioned since 1966 and has undergone several evolutions. Offerlé also defines political parties as « associations based on a (formally) free commitment whose aim is to provide their leaders with power within a grouping and their active militants with opportunities - ideal or material - to pursue goals, obtain personal benefits or achieve both together »²³ (definition brought by Plon in 1921 and underlined by Offerlé in 1971).

In contrast, Weber, who does not deny that it is in the State with a system of representation that parties take on their modern appearance, welcomes political groupings. He proposes the first theorisation where parties « can use any means to obtain power » and that they are capable of turning to personal interests. A movement, a group, a structure thus becomes a party when it is based on free membership and its supporters and leaders have a particular political interest (in this case the attainment of ultimate power). He insists on the voluntary aspect of membership which can be sociologically paradoxical: since there is a process of representation which participates in the political scene and game and which at the same time claims to have the monopoly of the right to speak for and represent all, whether or not there is a subsequent accession to

²² OFFERLE, Michel. « Chapitre premier. Qu'est-ce qu'un parti politique ? », Michel Offerlé éd., *Les partis politiques*. Presses Universitaires de France, 2018, pp 9-19.

²³ *Ibidem*.

positions of power. Weber then considers the party as a political enterprise. He thus highlights the three essential elements in the constitution of this structure: the party (the enterprise) is a specific type of social relationship (the sociation) and this relationship functions thanks to the profits of its leaders, profits which can vary enormously. The individual thus participates in the enterprise that creates political goods as a result of the accumulation of political capital. And this enterprise can be collective, individual, permanent, or temporary, local, regional, national or supranational. Bourdieu, in 1982, rightly described the party as « a space of competition where two types of capital (seen here as the whole of the technologies and ways of doing things that the participants in this relationship have accumulated, such as the logo) meet. We can then refer to the National Front, which has used the logo of an Italian party as its logo which, by combining, make it exist »²⁴.

George Lavau, in his work *Définition du parti politique*, identifies four ideological « traditions » which have all acted to create and maintain a certain distance, a distrust of politics and more particularly of the form of the political party which is a certain configuration of political action. He therefore proposes the Christian tradition, the trade unionist tradition, the Marxist ideology and finally the political commitment. The Christian attitude allows us to see that the believer, the Catholic supporter, sees in politics the world of the non-authentic, impure and unnatural. The syndicalist tradition has its roots mainly in the French revolutionary tradition which proposed to the working classes, feeling betrayed by the political bourgeoisie and the State, to take part in a form of collective action rejecting politicised means, and to acquire perspectives of a future world in which the fundamental political structure would have no reason to exist. Marxist ideology, on the other hand, already denounced the system of political aversion. This ideology argues that the main cause of alienations and unrealities in social relations lies in the economic sphere and denounces the State and its politics as tools of trickery through which the bourgeois class and its cadres justify their domination by law. Marxism thus aims at discarding politics and using political action for purposes other than that of sustaining the State, such as

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

the dismantling of the State itself. Finally, the fourth tradition, that of political commitment, was brought about and enhanced by the teaching of Emmanuel Mounier and his journal *Esprit*. However, he does not fail to warn, in his work *Le personnalisme*, about what he describes as « the tragic structure of action. »²⁵. The latter is divided between two schools, that of the fanatics who reproach it for being hesitant in the face of the refusal to divinise the relative, and that of the politicians who reproach it for being intractable by basing itself solely on its references.

However, over the years and with the modernisation of societies, political parties or even political commitment are no longer perceived as badly and attitudes towards them are no longer characterised by a total refusal. Nevertheless, the author argues that these famous four traditions have left their mark on political thinking. People perceive the party as a place for the expression and opposition of ideas rather than as a means of gaining power. But also, to name but a few, the project of making it « something else » is still relevant, in one way or another, and of differentiating these formations, these movements from « classical parties », « like the others ».²⁶ Furthermore, it is noted that in democratic regimes, political will comes from the grassroots of the electorate and that this will is expressed through the process of choosing one's representatives from the population. One can then question the nature of this voter and the way he or she is trained and conditioned to vote.²⁷

Nowadays, parties are defined in terms of the nature of their organisation and less in terms of the programmes or class of their members. Indeed, the anatomy of the structure is now the preferred character for defining and studying it. This modernisation can also be seen in the language used to describe them. The habits and customs of the parties are mostly unwritten, and the internal regulations of each party are by no means exhaustive and omit a large part of the practical reality of the structure.²⁸

²⁵ MOUNIER, Emmanuel. « L'engagement », Emmanuel Mounier éd., in *Le personnalisme*. Presses Universitaires de France, 2001, pp. 93-104.

²⁶ LAVAU, GEORGES E. « Définition Du Parti Politique. » *Esprit* (1940-), no. 257 (1), 1958, pp. 42-45.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ DUVERGER, Maurice, pp.17-22.

Originally, the term party was used to designate the factions that constituted the ancient republics, the groupings of individuals around a « condottiere » (Italian Renaissance term - *capitano di ventura* - which designates a mercenary army leader), the clubs where the deputies of National and revolutionary assemblies met, as well as the organising committees of monarchical regime elections and the popular movements and organisations of public opinion of modern democracies. The « real » parties, as Maurice Duverger points out, are not so old as they date from the 19th century. At that time, there were no modern parties as defined and perceived in our society today. His work shows us that parties are strongly influenced by their origins, since this makes it possible to distinguish between ideological parties and to compare their structures. However, it is important to take into account certain essential aspects such as the country and its regime, the party system (two-party system, multi-party system) and the voting system when characterising the parties. Furthermore, it can be observed that the larger a party becomes, the greater the need for its members to come together in smaller groups and thus to form internal coalitions based on affinities of ideas and interests. These ramifications also make it possible to better focus voting campaigns and target the electorate. The mechanism of this genesis is therefore the creation of parliamentary groups in the first place, followed by the emergence of electoral committees and the establishment of a constant link between these two constituent elements.²⁹

The political party, as any other social institution, is the outcome of the fusion of an organization and a role structure. As Maurice Duverger described it as « a community with a distinctive structure » as its apex and typology of parties, it was based on an organisational characteristic. We can also describe it as a « catch-all party », a definition given by Kirchheimer in 1966, and which can be qualified as a contradiction in terms that clearly characterised a different way of acting of political parties. And it helps to show, firstly, the decrease of traditional source of party's legitimacy and secondly, the increase of those arising from the political party's regular, institutionalised function in a democratic regime. Its structure and function can change its versatility allowing it to fulfil a wide range

²⁹ DUVERGER, Maurice, pp 23-40.

of social and political responsibilities. Role growth, on the other hand, has never been a need for the party's ongoing existence, nor is it true that only the party's institution is capable of fulfilling all of the tasks that individual political parties adopt. Thus, the modern political party is no longer a « simple group that professes the same political ideology » neither a « power-hungry organisation ». In fact, the modern party in a representative regime plays an important structural role and legitimises the election process as well as the constitution of a government. It is therefore a particularly powerful institution in democratic and non-democratic regimes, as it is created by the coercive authority of the State. Moreover, in these regimes, it can still be considered underdeveloped since it is denied the ability to fully realise its contemporary institutional function.

When we speak about one of the tools of the political party, it is important to highlight the competition within the electoral system as a common cause of democratic instability that parties manage on a simple basis. This competition helps to resolve the conceptual conflict that exists in the regime between equality and representation. Thus, the election process helps to affirm or reaffirm the legal sovereignty of the people. At the same time, it violates the concept of equality because it satisfies only a small part of the voting population and does not erase the disparities between the voters and the elected. So, to deal with these complications, the unique structure of the political party is extremely important and necessarily required. The existence of this structure is intended to be seen as an intertwined with the representative regime. They stand, move, and exist together as a one and only institution.

Liberal democracies have produced a multi-party system whereas totalitarian regimes that rely on directed consent have acknowledged the legitimacy of a single party and allowed it to remain. Parties have taken on a variety of roles both inside and outside of politics. They have even been known to survive the loss of functions and abilities. The final definition can be the following one: « a non-profit organization whose stated goal is to be represented in and lead the government institutions of a particular State or political community. To that end, the party performs three critical functions on a regular basis: the nominating candidates for public office, the adoption of statements of

public policy, primarily in the form of an election platform and the mobilisation's support for each of the above – candidates and policies. »³⁰

To conclude this part and in order to link this aspect of our work to the functioning and practice of structuralism, it is important to stress that in the context of a comparative study of political parties, we will limit ourselves almost exclusively to describing the influence of these doctrines on the structures studied. Furthermore, it is important, in a research paper where our case study is political parties, to understand what a party is and what its political aspects and dynamics are.

C. The Far-right: real come-back or resistance in the shadow after World War II?

Among many other institutions, structures, and think-tanks, Amnesty International argues that defining the far-right is not an easy task, since a huge number of movements, currents, parties and ways of thinking, which have little in common or even are totally antinomic, are described as far-right and lumped together. The association maintains that this term is used to define three types of movements: groups that sit, when elected, on the extreme right of the hemicycle; movements qualified as reactionary according to the Marxist vision of the term, supposedly in favour of a return to the old order; and finally, a group of extremists and sometimes violent identity-based groupings. It is then necessary to distinguish the trends and philosophical currents related to this category. We can speak of fascism, populism, or nationalism.

When we look at history in general, and the history of Europe in particular, we can see that it is from the beginning of the 20th century onwards that extreme right-wing movements and ideologies emerge in an intense way, including in particular fascist and authoritarian regimes (it is no longer necessary to recall the Nazi regime which reigned in Europe, but not only, for more than 30 years). Beyond the Nazi regime, most minorities were also persecuted (homosexuals, Jews, gypsies, etc.). After fading away for a while after the Second World War,

³⁰ DUVERGER, Maurice, pp 26 – 48.

we are witnessing a return of the far-right in Europe that is increasingly marked. As a matter of fact, some may have thought the Second World War would have eradicated or, at least, tackled the power of radical right parties, this is actually not verified in practice. In many European countries, leading figures advocating extremist ideologies went into exile and thus continued to ideologically nurture the activists and supporters of this type of regime and ensured the generational transmission between them, even if all this was indeed done in the shadows.³¹ Even if each far-right party has its own way of operating and its own struggles, there are many similarities in the ideologies and values of these parties. We will explore this further in our analysis of the case studies.

Although, before defining what, the extreme right is and what an extreme right-wing party is in a precise, scientific manner and under the prism of Political Science, we can already bring out some fairly general criteria. The criteria for describing the far-right (non-exhaustive list) in political science are as follows: anti-parliamentarianism, authoritarianism and a race-based doctrine, an organisation of society on the basis of individuals inequality, strong nationalism refusing to recognise the rights of foreigners on its territory and therefore privileging blood law over soil law. However, the criteria and definitions of this term are just as numerous as those for defining a party. They will vary from one theoretical wave to another, from one analysis to another. And if we were to name a few historic representatives of the extreme right, we would mention Hitler, Franco, Mussolini, Degrelle and Salazar.

With regards to the « classic » ideologies of this type of party, we can mention the ideological affiliation with fascist regimes, the use of more moderate terms such as « cultural difference » and the renunciation of the term « racial », a mutation of its basic electorate that was initially the precarious social class, and a broader opening to different social classes. Reaching even more the wealthier and upper classes as some defend, they went *from the slums to the Power*. Furthermore, without going into the details of the scientific analysis, it can be noted that certain characteristics, that are most often used to define right-wing extremist ideology, include racist and xenophobic tendencies, are rather

³¹ JAMIN, Jérôme. *L'extrême droite en Europe*, Bruylant, Editions juridiques, 2016, p40.

conservative and traditional ideas of this party family or, on the other extremity can be also considered as amalgams.

The French newspaper *Le Monde* defines the concept of extreme right as follows: « An ideological family of heterogeneous parties, movements and groupings that share a radical critique of democracy in the name of an authoritarian, racist and nationalist ideology that tends to exclude some individuals from the nation and/or from citizenship. »³² Indeed, as explained above, the speeches held by this type of association, and especially of this type of philosophy, have an extremist that can even be qualified as violent tendency and express to varying degrees the « denunciation of the current decadence ». Alongside a nostalgia for the golden age, the apology of elitist societies, the fear of the « other race » and, finally, the censorship of morals.³³

In some countries, the weight of history and colonial domination still plays a more important role today, since when we talk about the origins of the far-right and in particular what it defends as ideas such as racism and « fear of the other », it is indeed with the presence of post-colonial immigrants that this type of discourse and ideology have been accentuated and strengthened, particularly in countries such as France and the United Kingdom.³⁴

There are several labels and words used to refer to the far-right. From « extreme right » passing through « far-right » onto « populist radical right », these terms are used randomly and often indiscriminately to refer to the same type of organisation, such as the National Front for example. They have been widely used in political science research and are still used by many experts of this field of research. To name but a few, there are Arzheimer, Mudde and Bale. Finally, a consensus was reached, and we will now consider these terms to belong to one and unique family, since the most important common denominator is that these structures have an ethno-nationalist vision of society and tend to reject any dissent or minority. The extreme right-wingers maintain that the State should

³² *Le Monde*, « Extrême-droite », *Le Monde Diplomatique*, online, page consulted on the september 12th of 2021, 1p., <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/index/sujet/extremedroite>

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ GUILLET, Nicolas, AFIOUNI, Nada, *Les Tentatives de Banalisation de l'extrême Droite en Europe*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2019, pp. 6-7.

only be composed of native members of that nation and that elements not originating from that society threaten its balance and homogenisation. Furthermore, given that parties belonging to this tendency often questioning migration issues and that migration is one of the main points of far-right party platforms, they can be called « anti-immigration parties »³⁵.³⁶

Other criteria for characterising extreme right-wing parties are provided by Béatrice Giblin in her article *Extrême droite en Europe: une analyse géopolitique*. She adds, to those already listed and taken up in our work, that these types of parties are anti-Semitic, oppose the secularism of the State, defend Western Christianity and oppose abortion and homosexuality. And even if these criteria are no longer emphasised as much nowadays, they are still present in the partisan convictions and most importantly, represent in most cases the basis and foundations of these parties – not to be ignored even if the terms are not used in the present conjuncture.³⁷

The criteria and components mentioned earlier in this Chapter, which allow us to try to establish a definition of the concept of the extreme right, are still borrowed from a traditional radical right that is based on values that could be described as unsuitable for the post-modern period in which we live today.³⁸ Indeed, the application of the cult of the leader and the single party, for example, no longer meets the expectations of individualistic civil society, since these extreme right-wing parties manage to make inroads mainly thanks to the principle of elections, but also to public discourse and debate. Even more, such concepts as the cult of a person and single parties are very far and even at the antipode of the current democratic regimes widespread worldwide as it defines authoritarians and totalitarians regimes. However, these legacies of the traditional past of the extreme right remain fundamental. They retain the cultural conception of the people and of National identity from which comes this hatred of the external enemy, of the « other », but also of the internal enemy which corresponds to ethnic, religious, or political minorities.

³⁵ VAN DER BRUG, W, FENNEMA, M and TILLIE, J, « Why some anti-immigrant parties fail and others succeed. », *Comparative Political Studies*, 2005, vol.38, n°5, pp.537–573.

³⁶ MUIS, J.C, IMMERZEEL, Tim, « Causes and Consequences of the Rise of Populist Radical Right Parties and Movements in Europe. » *Current sociology* 65, no. 6, 2017, pp 910-911.

³⁷ GIBLIN, Béatrice, « Extrême droite en Europe : une analyse géopolitique », *Hérodote*, janvier 2012, n° 144, p. 3-17.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

Jérôme Jamin proposed to differentiate the category of extreme right from the ones of the populist and radical right, since according to himself and other studies, the parties would have shifted from this extreme right to more populist or nationalist rights. He explains that the difference is that these parties do or do not accept parliamentary democracy and that they only come to power through the ballot box. They tend to favour direct democracy, advocating referendums. Furthermore, these radical right-wingers advocate the market economy as it allows society to practice its entrepreneurship and, being very pro-capitalist, these parties reject globalisation and favour National capitalism only. Indeed, with regards to the economic organisation of society, theories such as protectionism and internal recirculation of resources is defended by right-wing parties rather than an international solidarity between countries and globalisation commonly adopted after David Riccardo's works³⁹.

These radical right-wingers are also distinguished from the extreme right-wingers by their lower degree of opposition to democracy. So, there are the extreme right-wing movements that totally reject parliamentary democracy and Human Rights ideology, and there are the radical right-wing movements that live with it. On the political chessboard, the extreme right will be what Piero Ignazi calls the « excluded third », while the radical right will live with their participation in power by being in a government coalition, like the Northern League for example.⁴⁰

In order to support the above, it seems relevant for us to take the following definition, proposed by René Remond, that states that « the political culture of a country is made up of its past that is indefinitely reread, indefinitely reinterpreted. »⁴¹ Furthermore, he highlights the distinction between the right and the left through the prism of the values they convey. Their values, seen as their statements on what life is and the meaning one gives to it, diverge in relation to various points such as family conception (the left will tend to give preference to the individual over the group), individualisation, the refusal of bourgeois

³⁹ David Ricardo defined the theory of comparative advantage in his 1817 book, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*.

⁴⁰ JAMIN, Jérôme, pp.11-14.

⁴¹ REMOND, René, « Les droites aujourd'hui », 2005, p.32, in « Comptes rendus », *Revue historique*, Paris, Audibert, 2006, volume 2, n° 638, pp.423-506.

morality, the notion of authority, etc. There is thus a refusal of identity, a rejection of the right and a refusal of the left. There is a refusal of identity and a reaffirmation of sovereignty advocated by the right, as opposed to a demand for the primacy of secularism and the rejection of liberalism by the left. In terms of social and economic issues, the factors that structure the debate, the left-right divide, remain quite fundamental. However, there are fewer strongly opposing societal debates than economic or political debates, for example.

In order to add one more definition to our research to help supporting the vision of the extreme right that we choose to apply in this dissertation, it is interesting to take into account the one proposed by Anne-Marie Duranton who says that expressions of the radical right are « cultures of an authoritarian (anti-egalitarian), hierarchical, anti- or a-rationalist type. » However, according to some views on the issue, it is not only ideological elements that need to be considered during the process of defining the far-right. Indeed, some defend that in addition, elements such as organisational forms, the sociology of the member and the supporter, the sociology of the voters and the psychological aspect must also be taken into account.

It is therefore clear that defining exactly what the extreme right is not an easy task, and that there are such diverse views, aspects, and categorisations that it is simply not possible to find a single definition. It is also quite difficult to bring together all the criteria proposed, in this work or more widely in the scientific literature on the subject, in order to offer a complete definition. Whether we take into account the characteristics mentioned, the categories proposed or even the customary, modern or post-modern views, our definition will always have a subjective tendency and will never be the same as another person's. However, we can retain some aspects and visions that can be found in particular in the discourse of the National Front, such as national preference, nostalgia for a glorious past, and the rejection of immigration. We can also look at the political space and analyse the place of the party studied in relation to the other parties present in the political game. If we ask ourselves where the National Front or the Northern League stand, we will observe that they are strongly placed in the right corner of the chessboard and that there are very few, if any, parties

further to the right than them, at least in their respective States. So, this is a purely geographical criterion. Paradoxically speaking, we can see that already at the time Jean-Marie Le Pen, and now his daughter, rejected this designation and called for the *dédiabolisation* of the party. To continue this work, we will define the extreme right as more than an ideology, it is a particular form of organisation, which obtains most of its success through the ballot box and whose general themes are anti-parliamentarianism, rejection of foreigners and therefore of anti-migration policies, as well as a preference for direct democracy as a substitute for representative democracy, but often the desire for a more authoritarian regime. Moreover, we can underline that this type of political formation (taken as such in the case of our work) holds rather racist and trenchant discourses on some of the major current social issues. We will further define the aspect of the programmes of this type of party in our case analysis.

D. The European Parliament and its electoral system: a constantly evolving structure

As defined by the European Union's institutions, the European Parliament is « an important forum for political debate and decision-making at the EU level »⁴².

The European Parliament, in place since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) formally created by the Treaty of Paris in 1951, has taken its current form after several advances and modifications during a wide period on what constitutes the European Union that we know today. Indeed, first established as a « common assembly » in 1952, it will become the European parliamentary assembly in 1957 with the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC). It will then take the name of European Parliament in 1962 for, at the time, consultation only.⁴³

The European Union's tasks have therefore expanded considerably over the years and now holds part of the classic State functions. In addition to having

⁴² EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, « Europol », website of the European Parliament, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en> (page consulted on the august 17, 2021)

⁴³ GOBIN, Corinne, « L'Union européenne, la recomposition conservatrice », dans Tony Andréani et Michel Vakaloulis (dir), *Refaire la politique*, Paris, Syllepse, 2002, p.103-116.

a single currency, the Euro (€), it has set up a « rapid deployment force », although it does not have a common army, and offers peacekeeping missions throughout the world. Moreover, it impacts on national domains such as family rights, health, or social protection, which sometimes caused some discrepancies on the inter-State scene. But also, new modes of action and new modes of governance have been attributed to it since its creation.

From that time on, the European Parliament has acquired legislative and budgetary competences following the various modifications of the European treaties. It is in fact the only European power to be directly elected by the European citizens and electoral core. This parameter should logically make the European elections an important issue and elections of the first order, but this aspect is not reflected. The Parliament has therefore a legislative function, which enables it to draw up proposals for new legislations. During the procedure for the adoption of these acts, there are two types of procedures: the « ordinary legislative procedure », which places the Parliament on an equal foot with the Council of Union, and the « special legislative procedure », which places the Parliament in the role of an advisory body. As explained above, various amendments to the European treaties have enabled the Parliament to extend its powers. We can therefore take as an example the « co-decision procedure » which was introduced by the Maastricht Treaty on European Union in 1992 and which was then extended and adapted by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999 in order to reinforce its effectiveness. This procedure places the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on the same level and applies to 85 policy areas covering most of the Union's competences. The procedure starts with a legislative proposal from the Commission and consists of up to three readings. The two co-legislators adopt legislation together and have the same rights and obligations. It is important to stress that neither of them can adopt a text without the agreement of the other and must reach a consensus on an identical text. It was only with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 that this procedure, renamed the « ordinary legislative procedure », became the main legislative procedure in the EU's decision-making system.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, « Europarl », website of the European Parliament, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/fr/powers-and-procedures/legislative-powers>, (page consulted on the august 18, 2021)

Through its budgetary powers, the European Parliament has the opportunity to adopt the entire annual EU budget, in close cooperation with the Council. Finally, the European Parliament has democratic control over many of the institutions that make up the EU, including the European Council, the Council of the EU, the Commission, and the Court of Justice. The Lisbon Treaty signed on December 13th, 2007, put in place after the rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TECE), frames the European Union and its proper functioning. Isabelle Guinaudeau said in her paper on the European elections that there are several challenges for comparative politics that « The Lisbon Treaty crowned its conquest of ever greater powers, notably by making co-decision the « ordinary » legislative procedure and giving the European Parliament a greater role in appointing the Commission »⁴⁵. It has therefore allowed the European institutions, and in particular the Parliament, to enlarge its portfolio of actions and to extend its powers. Indeed, « turning to the bigger picture, there has been a dramatic increase in the power of the European Parliament in the last two decades »⁴⁶ highlighted Simon Hix and Michael Marsh. It is the establishment of this one that also allowed, for the first time, to establish a link and to attribute a role to the national parliaments in the European Union. It now allows National parliaments to consult, among other things, the EU's legislative proposals and to verify that the principle of subsidiarity is maintained. Furthermore, as explained by the European institutions themselves, "The Treaty of Lisbon also specified that the European Parliament and national parliaments shall together define the organization and promotion of effective and regular interparliamentary cooperation within the Union."⁴⁷

The internal organization of the European Parliament is as follows: it is made up of members, the President (which is David Sassoli since July the 3rd of 2019) but also political groups, committees, and delegations. The president is elected for a renewable term every two and a half years. He will represent the

⁴⁵ GUINAUDEAU, Isabelle. « Les Élections Européennes: Un Défi Pour La Politique Comparée ? » *Politique Européenne*, no. 37, 2012, p.170.

⁴⁶ HIX, Simon, MARSH, Michael, « Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections », *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2007, p507.

⁴⁷ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, « Europarl », website of the European Parliament, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/fr/powers-and-procedures/national-parliaments>, (page consulted on the august 18, 2021).

European Parliament in the International scene and will be the referent at the level of the European institutions' level. The President, beyond his primary functions which are *ad hoc* for a President (supervising, ordering, and coordinating), has a key role since it is he, together with the President of the Council, who will countersign the legislative acts adopted in plenary session⁴⁸. The European Parliament is made up of 705 members (called MEPs, Members of the European Parliament), all from the 27 member countries of the European Union, who are elected every five years with the universal suffrage since 1979.

The political groups, inside the Parliament, are currently eight (European People's Party (EPP), Socialist and Democrats (S&D), Renew Europe, Greens/European free Alliance (EFA), Identity and Democracy (ID), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), European United Left/Nordic Green Left (EUL/NGL) and Non-Inscripts (NI)). In this work, we will focus our attention on the Identity and Democracy group, which includes our study case parties: the Northern League and the National Front. Twenty-three members are required to form a political group and at least one-quarter of the member State must be represented inside the group. And most importantly, members may not belong to more than one political group. If the members are not part of any political group, they are called non-attached members. Each group has a specific internal organisation with a president (or two), a bureau and a secretariat. For example, before each vote in plenary session, the political group will look at the reports written by the committees and sees if there are any amendments to be made.

As previously mentioned, the European elections of the European Parliament have been held, every five years, since 1979 at a multinational level. These elections are held on the basis of Universal suffrage, but above all, on the basis of degressive proportional representation, and this has been this case since 1999. This means that the representation is proportional to the population of each members country and the votes can be done in the form of a party list or a single vote. So, the larger the population of a country is, the more Eurodeputies it will have. The number of parliamentary representatives has increased over the years

⁴⁸ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, «Europarl», website of the European Parliament, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en> (page consulted on the august 17, 2021)

and now stands at 751 MEPs today. These numbers are one of the updates figuring in the Lisbon Treaty. In order to be elected, an MEP (Member of the European Parliament) must meet certain conditions as follows: being a citizen of the European Union, be at least 18 years old (it depends on the country, some of them as in Italy for example, must have 25 years or more), and being a resident of the country where the person will be elected.

It is important to highlight that, as far as the country is concerned, a different system is used whereby party seats are distributed according to their national votes. And therefore, as the number of seats is known before the election, those seats are allocated to the candidates on the basis of the regional list. This is the case, for example, in Italy.

Moreover, when the first direct elections were held in June 1979, the Parliament had negligible power and had little credibility as a putative legislature. It lacked political influence. Its members and nascent political groups were totally unknown and were barely visible, and a lot of governments and national parliaments were deeply suspicious of its goals and ambitions⁴⁹. As many other European Union's institutions, that were given progressive legitimacy and recognition in the legislative history of the Union, the European Parliament is currently a vital part of the European electoral scheme and EU Members States' citizens representation at a supranational level.

E. The theoretical model of second-order elections

We will now have a greater look at the theory of second-order elections. Indeed, appearing at the same time as the first elections to the European Parliament, second-order elections were defined as such to qualify mainly European elections. Even if this concept has since been applied to other levels of elections such as regional elections, as we will see in our analysis, studies on the subject are mainly focused on supranational elections.

⁴⁹ LODGE, Juliet, *The 2009 elections to the European Parliament*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, *sine loco*, p.XIII

In order to define this term as precisely as possible, and to explore its aspects and hypotheses in our state of the art, we will outline the different characteristics applied to and by this theory in the scientific literature.

The term « second-order », and the concept associated with it, emerged in the 1980s through the work of Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt. Even before defining the concept of “second-order elections”, it is interesting to define what a first-order election is. These are elections that take place at the national level and are aimed at forming an executive government according to Nathalie Brack.⁵⁰

The arena of first-order elections is also the place where the power of national governments is contested. And so, we could say in the current State organised World we live in, these elections therefore have more « important » stakes than European elections, issues that come first. We are now only reaching the new Governance world that also includes non-State actors that are gaining progressive importance in the International Relations framework. In that sense, but still, these second-order elections are considered less important because they are organised differently in different States. The author gives three characteristics of what a second-order election is: a low turnout, a protest votes and an electoral behaviour that aims to punish the parties in power.

The studies on the second-order election model arose from the analysis of the electoral results of the first European elections in 1979. When Reif and Schmitt looked at these results, they found that they did not reflect the anticipated basic « balance » of forces within the European institutions. The authors then realised that the analysis of the European election results cannot be done on its own and must be used and linked with the elections at National level. The scales of analysis cannot be taken independently and separately. Karlheinz Reif rightly says that what matters « is the political situation in the first-order arena at the time of the second-order election. »⁵¹ The first-order arena, being here the National-Level arena with ad-hoc National elections.

⁵⁰ BRACK, Nathalie, « Élections Européennes 2019: Vers La Politisation Du Projet Européen ? » *Diplomatie*, no. 99, 2019, p 13.

⁵¹ REIF, Karlheinz, « Ten second-order elections » in REIF K. (Ed.) *Ten Second-Order Elections*, 1985, p8.

The nature of European second-order elections is therefore based on three empirical effects: voter turnout is lower during these elections compared to national elections, the parties in power at the time of the European elections have a tendency to lose votes compared to the previous national election, and even if the outcome of the European elections has no direct impact on the composition and functioning of the national government, the vote can be used to influence the next national election or the policies of the current governments.⁵² This vote can then benefit parties that are less popular at a national level or parties that do not obtain a majority of national seats, which can lead to a fragmentation of the party system. Indeed, one reason for the lower turnout in these European elections is that parties invest less money in campaigning for these elections and therefore voters feel less encouraged to vote. However, we have not enough data that could yet confirm that this element is decisive for the results obtained in the elections and that it is the reason why some governmental parties are losing. Furthermore, we note that voters might vote differently if European elections that were held at the same time as national elections.⁵³ The extent of the effects of turnout and other changes in voting behaviours will depend on the timing of these elections in relation to the national electoral cycle. It is therefore the influence that time has on the attitude of voting individuals towards the governmental forces in power that will determine such tendencies. Time is then cyclical and is defined by the national elections and when they take place.⁵⁴ This theory was introduced by Reif in 1984, one of the precursors of the theory of second-order elections. We will develop this theory in the state-of-the-art part of this work.

The European elections can therefore be seen as « sincere elections », where people vote « from the heart » rather than strategically.⁵⁵ This kind of

⁵² SAUGER, Nicolas, « Élections de second ordre et responsabilité électorale dans un système de gouvernance à niveaux multiples », *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, 2015, vol.53, n°1, pp. 21-47.

⁵³ HIX, Simon, MARSH, Michael, pp. 496-497.

⁵⁴ MAGNI-BERTON, Raül, « Pourquoi les partis gouvernementaux perdent-ils les élections intermédiaires ? Enquête Eurobaromètre 2004 et élections européennes », *Revue française de science politique*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2008, pp. 643-656.

⁵⁵ VAN DER EIJK, Cees, FRANKLIN, Mark, OPPENHUIS, Eric, « The Strategic Context: Party Choice. » In *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*, 1996, eds. Cees van der Eijk and Mark Franklin. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 332-65.

electoral behaviour could be linked to the previously mentioned fact that European elections are not yet seen as having that much impact on the real political decision-making process as a national level election, in which sphere voters would be more pragmatic then. Indeed, Reif and Schmitt have argued that the characterisation of this pattern of elections can be explained, beyond a higher abstention from voting and a higher protest vote, by the fact that parties, media and voters do not find enough interest and stakes to their liking.⁵⁶ Moreover, when it comes to sanction voting, Straeten and other theoreticians have shown that it is motivated more by the existing balance of power than by the importance of the vote and what it could bring about. Indeed, the stakes of European elections are considered by the voting society as less important and less impacting on the life of each individual than regional or federal elections.⁵⁷ When it is time for them to vote, a part of the voting population either expresses its dissatisfaction by voting, for example, or does not go to the polls at all.⁵⁸

From what we have seen and according to the several aspects and characteristics of the second-order elections model, we can define it as the following way: it is a model of electoral analysis that is based on several specific constituent criteria which are the turnout rate, an often-inverse result between the national election and the subsequent European election, the timing of the European elections and, finally, the motivation for voting.

This model is, in most cases, used to analyse the results of European elections but can be adapted and used just as well for an analysis of other level elections such as regional elections for example. Moreover, this concept gives a greater theoretical path for the analysis of voting behaviour, either at the micro level focusing on the individual or at the macro level focusing on the party. It is therefore thanks to this characterisation of the concept and the explanation and relevance of what it represents that we will attempt to analyse the electoral results of the parties studied in our cases in the European elections.

⁵⁶ GUINAUDEAU, Isabelle, p.170.

⁵⁷ STRAETEN Karine van der, SAUGER Nicolas, LASLIER Jean-François, BALIS André, « Sorting Out Mechanical and Psychological Effects in Candidate Elections : An Appraisal with Experimental Data », *British Journal of Political Science*, 2013, vol.43, n°4, pp. 937-944.

⁵⁸ SCHAKEL, Arjan H., JEFFERY, Charlie, "Are Regional Elections really 'Second-Order' Elections?", *Regional Studies*, 2013, vol.47, n°3, pp. 323-34.

III. STATE OF THE ART

A. Sociological, linguistic, or political structuralism?

Beyond defining the term as a method of studying social behaviours (such as language and its practice) and how these behaviours shape the structure in which they take place, we will comb through the literature on the subject and attempt to understand, through the research and scholarly analysis produced, what structuralism is in the social sciences and how and why it is useful for our current research on the rise of far-right parties at the European level. We will therefore discuss several authors and scientists who have studied the issue and examine the use of this paradigm in social and political sciences.

This concept has been studied and defined in various fields such as ethnology (study of human groups), linguistics or anthropology and has been developed strongly after the Second World War. One of the precursors, Claude Lévi-Strauss, developed this theory through his analysis of incest in male-female relations among the Amazonian peoples. In an interview dated May 4th, 1984, Claude Levi-Strauss declared, in response to a journalist's question as to what structuralism was: « It is a word that has been used in so many ways, if you like, that I myself no longer dare use it. Because it was imagined that it was a great novelty, whereas it is not at all. It is simply an effort to introduce into what is wrongly called the human sciences, the social sciences, a little more rigour than there was previously. »⁵⁹ In this interview, he uses as an example to explain what structuralism is, the fact that when a face is described to us, we can never perceive it exactly. It is not possible to imagine, in the head or on a painter's canvas for example, a perfect copy of the face described. So, there is a face A and a face B. And consequently, if it is not possible to describe a face perfectly, it is on the other hand possible to find a rule of transformation which makes it possible to pass from this face A to this face B by a deformation in itself easier to implement. Structuralism, according to Levi-Strauss, means finding ourselves

⁵⁹ PIVOT, Bernard, « Apostrophes : Claude Levi-Strauss « le structuralisme » », 4 mai 1984, Ina culture, 2012.

in front of very complicated objects and saying to ourselves that, since we will not be able to describe this object in the slightest detail because it is impossible, we will, on the other hand, be able to study the differences between these objects, the original one and the one produced, and that this difference is simpler to understand than the object itself.⁶⁰

The term structuralism comes from the Latin « *structura* » and the verb « *struere* » and has its origins in the field of architecture. Later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, that the meaning of the word was modified and extended to the field of living beings. Authors such as Fontenelle and Bernot considered the physical structure of the human body or language as a construction and this was already a starting point, since it was then considered as a description of how the parts of a body constitute a whole, in this case a living beings. These constituent parts can be physical as well as psychological, cultural, etc.

It is from the 19th century onwards, after the Second World War as we mentioned above, that this concept will really impose itself and rise to the forefront of the social and political sciences with the help of recognised theorists such as Marx, Weber, Lipset and Rokkan, Durkheim or Spencer or Kenneth Waltz, to name but a few. The concept of the term then became more and more abstract. André Lalande described it as a neologism, since from then on, we would no longer speak of structure but of structuralism.⁶¹ In fact, Durkheim, in « *The Rules of Sociological Method* » of 1895, devoted a sociological study to this term. For him, society constitutes a whole that is implacable to the sum of its units, and it is on this basis that the sociological discipline of structuralism will develop.

It can be stressed that the term structuralist was first used in the field of psychology with the aim of countering functional psychology, a form of psychology which considers psychological phenomena from the point of view of the role they play in life and their usefulness for the individuals, which considers them in their relationship to needs. However, the real starting point of the research and studies produced on this paradigm comes from the modern

⁶⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁶¹ *Ibidem.*

evolution of linguistics. It was in this field that Saussure carried out his research. And it is therefore, with linguistics as the starting point, that the term will take off and develop enormously during the 20th century. The first point of reference from which structuralism spreads most widely in the intellectual field is the year 1966. Indeed, 1966 is a special year, which is highlighted in this case, because it is the key moment in its evolution and because, subsequently, it will slowly begin its downward slope and come under fire.⁶²

François Dosse, in his book *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome I: Le champ du signe. 1945-1966*, argues that one of the reasons for the glory of this concept, especially in France in the 1950s and 1960s, is that it was prized and considered in many disciplines as a paradigm that allowed for advances in science but also in critical consciousness. Indeed, according to the author, the concept of structuralism has a dual mission of contestation and counterculture. It pushes back the traditional Western culture and allows for a more modern development of linguistics among other things.⁶³

If we return to the respective articles by François Dosse and Alexis Cartonnet, we can complete our analysis with several elements. As explained in the theoretical framework, three general axioms have been outlined (relation, position and permutation) but the authors propose to add three specific axioms, namely anarchy, differentiation and distribution, as well as three points of debate, namely the hegemony of linguistics and semiology (the science that studies the system of signs in linguistics), the rivalry between sociology and the scientific discipline of mathematics, and finally the assumption that there is a conservative aspect of the structural method. They then conclude their analysis with two propositions: it is quite possible to extend this concept to a practice of political science and an analysis of International Politics with the State as the primary referent can be justified by a structural analysis. It is therefore fair to say that structuralism can operate in the discipline of international relations and that international relations, taken as an object of study, can be analysed structurally.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ DOSSE, François, *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome I : Le champ du signe. 1945-1966*. La Découverte, « Poche / Sciences humaines et sociales », 2012, pp 9-16.

If we consider the work of Kenneth Waltz, we can observe that he takes the principle of Cartonnnet's three axioms as a basis, but names them differently. These axioms become principles of « ordering », « differentiation » and « distribution ».

To return to Levi-Strauss, we can say that he seeks to put Ferdinand De Saussure's structural linguistics (General Linguistics Course) into practice in the field of anthropology. To take his example of the family, he considers it, traditionally speaking, as the fundamental object of his structural analysis, but above all by considering this subject as an autonomous unit composed of its members. The distant members of the family are then considered as secondary. Claude Levi-Strauss shows that the family acquires its identity through its relations with other units. He thus overturned the conservative vision of classical anthropology by taking secondary members into account in his structural analysis. He succeeds in linking intra-family relations to algebra with formulas such as A is to B what C is to D. So, to put this equation into practice, we can say that if the nephew and uncle of a family are related to the relations between brother and sister, then the relation between father and son is related to that between husband and wife.⁶⁴ Furthermore, structuralism could not be better defined than by Claude Levi-Strauss' statement that « the rules of parenthood and marriage appeared to us to exhaust, in the diversity of their historical and geographical modalities, all the possible methods of ensuring the integration of biological families within the social group. We thus found that seemingly complicated and arbitrary rules could be reduced to a small number. There are only three possible elementary structures of kinship, and these three structures are constructed with the help of two forms of exchange which themselves depend on a single differential character, namely the harmonic or disharmonic character of the system considered. »⁶⁵

Another author, Paul-François Paoli, supports in his article *Le structuralisme en quatre questions* in Le Figaro, an analysis of structuralism as a theory according to which « a human being can only be apprehended through

⁶⁴ DUSSEY, Dorothée, « Les Théories de l'inceste en anthropologie. Concurrence des représentations et impensés », *Sociétés & Représentations*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2016, pp. 73-85.

⁶⁵ POUILLON, Jean, pp 9-16.

a network of symbolic relations which are as many structures as possible in which he participates without being conscious of it ».⁶⁶

Finally, it is also important to expose the vision of this theory proposed by Laurent McFalls who shows that the individualist theory of society is opposed to that of structuralism since the latter, contrary to individualism, supposes that society produces the individual and that therefore, the structures of this society, namely the social interactions which take place during the process of production of the individuals who animate this society, have a completely autonomous existence and a regulation of their own. This structuralist theory therefore shares the same ontological questions with individualism (what a being is and what it represents) but differs from it largely in its ideological orientation. Moreover, unlike conservative theories which impose a distinct and assigned place in society on individuals and which maintain that any change in position would lead to anarchy, the more modern and progressive structuralist theories (such as Marxism or those dealing with social structures as expounded by Strauss) are by no means static and evolve over time. And it is this evolution that will be influenced by various internal or external factors. Once again, we can emphasise that structuralism, which is very present in political sociology, makes it possible to explain the advent of certain democratic institutions as the direct consequence of the structural development of a given society. To do so, the author uses the example of the attitude of drivers in Montreal to put into practice the differences between structuralism and individualism. He starts from the assumption that North American drivers are much more excitable, rude and careless than Europeans. He then expresses that for an individualist, this would be because most drivers are jerks. The structuralist, on the other hand, would justify this type of behaviour by the fact that the roads are in poor condition, that there are too many traffic signs and that these are too contradictory and/or useless, or that traffic lights are not coordinated. In short, the structuralist will therefore take into account the structural aspects, the aspects that allow the individual to live and practice his or her actions and social interactions.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ PAOLI, Paul-François, « le structuralisme en quatre questions », *Le Figaro*, 4 novembre 2009, 1p.

⁶⁷ MCFALLS, Laurent, *Construire le politique*, Canada (Saint-Nicolas), Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006, pp10-11.

We will now, here, apply the Structural paradigms to our case study on European right-wings parties. It is important to underline the wide use of this theory in the study of other political movements and ideologies in the current political literature. Indeed, the concept was also used in the analysis of left-wing political parties such as by Gideo Baker in the left in Latin America. He insists on the importance of the theory in the link between the civil society and the political regime in place in the 1990s, at the time, not always democratic.⁶⁸ In the same way, structuralism was widely used to compare and analyse the behaviour of left-wing parties. What comes to our interest here, and more precisely linked to our case study, is the common use of the theory with what regards to right-wing parties. To another extreme, Luis Corvolan Marquez uses the structuralism to greater study the rise of the military dictatorship in Chile between 1973 and 1990. Indeed, we will conclude a part of his analysis by stating that the political process leading to the military coup was « fuelled by (...) factors located outside the national polity » even mentioning structural changes brought to the political regime by external actors (the United-States in this precise case). In that sense, and there would be a very important volume literature bringing this type of research linking political processes to structuralism theories, we can start naturally drawing the importance of structures in every political process. Even more with regards to the rise of far-right parties in the European election scheme.⁶⁹

Moreover, several scientific articles that concern the analysis of the support of far-right parties in Western Europe use structural conflicts as point of start. As Kriesi and Schulte-Cloos in their article « *Support for radical parties in Western Europe: structural conflicts and political dynamics* » who defend that « integrating theories on changing socio-political conflict with arguments about crises of political representation, we contend that electoral support for radical right and radical left parties is rooted in two distinct sets of socio-structural transformation of society. » We will later come to realise that the above-

⁶⁸ BAKER, Gideon, « From structuralism to voluntarism: The Latin American left and the discourse on civil society and democracy. », *Contemporary Politics*, 1998, Vol.4, n°4, pp.391–411.

⁶⁹ MARQUEZ, Luis Corvalan, « Chile: How the right prepared the intellectual grounds for a military dictatorship. », *Contemporary Politics*, 1998, Vol.4, n°4, pp.433–442.

mentioned sets are the lack of responsiveness of pre-existing parties and voter's discontent. Plus, structuralism is being an important theoretical basis to the comprehension of such movements, it is widely interesting to apply this model of theory in our analysis concerning also far-right parties. It is somehow comforting basing our research on this theoretical background to better understand the importance of second-order elections in the rise of the National Front and the Northern League in the European electoral framework.⁷⁰ Finally, if we go deeper in what is with regards to our two political parties studied here, the National Front and the Northern League, several theoretical resources are already in our possession in the present literature. Indeed, on the French side, when analyzing the identity crisis, he claims the Front National has gone through between 1972 and 2015, Sylvain Crépon, details all internal procedures on the designation of the head of parties. Going from personal criteria, such as personality, charisma, and even physical appearances, but also the reception of the new head of party by the public, the discourses taken into consideration by the press and its visibility. This brings a new perspective, a new dynamic vision of the social perception of the party bringing into light the importance of not only political backgrounds but also social criteria.⁷¹ On the Italian side, the notoriety and importance of the literature revolving on Berlusconi's party is not to be ignored. Indeed, this party gives us a first perfect example of the « process of symbolic interaction between the people and the State »⁷². When analyzing the current visibility of the Northern League in the European political framework, it is important to say such party can be considered as being a threat but not when you take it on its own but when you take it as a unit of a structure. The structure being the Italian far-right scheme that could lead the Northern League to an important position if they align. In addition to that, new dynamics and themes are brought to the first plan of the political scene, such as territorial battles, the importance of the Nation and the rejection of supra-national actors' control like the EU.

⁷⁰ KRIESI, Hans-Peter, SCHULTE-CLOOS, Julia, « Support for radical parties in Western Europe: Structural conflicts and political dynamics. », *Electoral Studies*, 2020, Vol.65, pp1-10.

⁷¹ BLANCHARD, Pascal, THOMAS, Dominic, BANCEL, Nicolas, *Vers la guerre des identités? De la fracture coloniale à la révolution ultranationale*, La Découverte, 26 mai 2016, pp28-42.

⁷² ARANGO ERAZO, Ana Maria, « The construction of Italy's National-State Identity between 2008 – 2014. », mémoire de maîtrise, University Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario, 2017.

There is a multi-level debate and not an ad hoc party vs party electoral dynamic anymore.⁷³

It is thus clear that structuralism is not only a method for analysing abstract and unconscious phenomena in the human sciences, but that it is above all a practical method that takes into account all the given sets and systems that are produced and observable (such as the system of linguistics or the practical case of incest developed by Levi-Strauss). Furthermore, we should not overlook the fact that the objects studied through the prism of structuralism are subject to different forces at the horizontal and vertical levels, which in our case of study are respectively the transnational movements as well as the relations between parties and regional movements, and the very evolution of these parties at the national level. On the one hand, we have to consider a study that takes the object as a unit of analysis and on the other hand, a more global study that takes the whole as a whole (the European Union for example).⁷⁴ Finally, there is no clearer way to justify the pertinence of the structural theoretical approach in our case study with this case scenario. The importance of both the National Front in France and the Northern League in Italy are clearly enounced in the past and current literature as a combination of social, political, and electoral factors.

B. Criteria, theories and limits of the second-order elections' model.

As previously defined, second-order elections are a model of election analysis created by Reif and Schmitt following the first European Parliament elections of 1979, which aims to understand why certain results are so different and distant from federal (or other) electoral results, even within the member States of the European Union. Three aspects that characterise them have been exposed in the scientific literature on the subject.

We will therefore see, through this state of the art, how second-order elections are perceived but especially how they are used to analyse electoral results. Several hypotheses, either verified or not, have been studied. This literature will therefore allow us to see whether or not there is a correlation

⁷³ PARAVICINI, Giulia, « Italy's far-right jolts back from dead. », *Politico*, February 3rd of 2016, 1p.

⁷⁴ CARTONNET, Alexis, 2011.

between the electoral results of the National Front party in France and the Northern League in Italy in the last 6 European elections (from 1994 to 2019) and the second-order election model. Can we say that the European elections, at least some of them, meet the criteria of second-order elections? As we previously enounced the criteria an election should meet to be qualified as second-order elections, we will now resituate the concept in the contemporary literature to better understand to what extent our case study can apply.

Since the first elections to the European Parliament in 1979, eight elections have taken place, along with profound changes in the European structures and regulations, the role of the institution and their importance in the system of public governance. Indeed, as seen in the explanatory section of the European Parliament, various structural and functional changes have taken place, notably with the Lisbon Treaty. This allowed us to highlight the links between national and supranational issues and also to realise the degree of importance given to these elections, which are often described as second-order.⁷⁵

Beyond taking into account the work of Reif and Schmitt, we will look at some authors who have proposed to confirm this model of elections or to put forward new avenues of actions.

First of all, we have been able to explain that there is a feature that implies a cyclical theory of elections. It assumes that the timing of the European election in the national electoral cycle would determine the importance of the consequences on its outcomes. Indeed, according to the theories, the timing of the European elections in relation to the timing of national elections is crucial. If a European election is held a short period of time after a national election, there will be a tendency for the parties in power at that time to be in a « honeymoon period »⁷⁶.

At this stage of the cycle, turnout is generally lower than in national elections, but fervour for the governing parties is increasing.

⁷⁵ SAUGER, Nicolas, pp. 21-47.

⁷⁶ HIX, Simon, MARSH, Michael, pp. 496-497.

We have also seen that in the criteria that define a second-order European election, we can detect that parties generally invest less time and money and put less resources into their election campaign. However, it has been shown by Hix and Marsh that when a European election is held just before a national election, parties will tend to invest more, which will encourage citizens to come and vote and increase turnout. For voters, it can also allow them to strategically influence the next national election.⁷⁷ Finally, Miller and Mackie explain that when a European election takes place perfectly between two national elections, the cards are reshuffled and many things, predictable or not, can happen. We will then observe that the parties in power are very unpopular.⁷⁸ For States at the end of the electoral cycle, i.e., close to new general elections, the European Parliament elections can be, and most of the time are, considered as « test » elections in order to see which governmental formations are likely to be in power.⁷⁹

In this logic of second-order elections, Sauger and Kriesi⁸⁰ propose as an explanation for the electoral loss of some government parties during the electoral cycle that voters have to make a choice between « not attributing any responsibility to the EU or disregarding their view of that responsibility in their vote for the European elections. Instead, they should place full responsibility on the national government. »⁸¹

The originality of this theory of electoral cycles therefore lies in the fact that the outcome of second-order elections is strongly impacted and determined by the timing of the election during the mandate.⁸²

The other criteria that can be attributed in our process of defining second-order elections is that it predicts general results on European elections. National parties in power at time T will receive fewer votes than in the previous national

⁷⁷ MUELLER, J.E., "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson.", *American Political Science Review*, 1970, Vol. 64, n°1, pp. 18–34.

⁷⁸ MILLER, William, MACKIE, Myles, « The Electoral Cycle and the Asymmetry of Government and Opposition Popularity. », *Political Studies*, 1973, vol.21, n°3, pp. 263–79.

⁷⁹ ABRIAL, Stéphanie, Pina, Christine, « Les élections européennes de juin 1999 dans les quinze pays de l'Union : une consultation de « second ordre » ? » *Revue Française de Science Politique*, vol. 49, no. 4/5, Sciences Po University Press, 1999, pp. 707–17,

⁸⁰ KRIESI Hans-Peter, « The Political Consequences of the Financial and Economic Crisis in Europe: Electoral Punishment and Popular Protest », *Swiss Political Science Review*, 2012, Vol.18, n°4, p. 518-522.

⁸¹ SAUGER, Nicolas, pp. 21-47.

⁸² MAGNI-BERTON, Raül, pp. 643-656.

election and the more votes the party got in the previous national election, the fewer votes it will get in the next European election. Franklin, Oppenhuis and Van Der Eijk in their work « the strategic context: party choice » have shown that voters vote for smaller parties with whom their interests converge rather than for larger parties to whom they feel less close, but which have a better chance of forming the next national government. The latter, whether in government or opposition, therefore, loses more votes when competing in second-order elections with parties that have fewer members and are less popular.⁸³

Other studies have shown that if we analyse voting at the individual level, the person who is more pro-Europe will be more likely to vote and vice versa, whereas if we take the analysis of voting at the supranational level, encompassing the whole of society, the State that benefits most from EU budgetary support will have a higher internal participation rate and vice versa.⁸⁴ Ferrara and Weishaupt further suggest that if voters in European elections base their voting choice on the position taken by the party on European issues, this can influence the outcome in two ways: parties whose programmes contain more European issues, positive or negative, are more likely to score in European Parliament elections. Secondly, parties that are more Eurosceptic and opposed to European integration in particular are more likely to score better in European elections than in national elections.⁸⁵

Another criterion, which is likely to attract particular attention in our case analysis in this dissertation, is the sanction vote. Indeed, regardless of the timing of the election, voters may decide to cast a vote that expresses their dissatisfaction with the party or government in power in the State. This may be in relation to their economic or social policies, or in relation to their programme, or to affirm their political preferences. In this case, the size of the party does not matter.⁸⁶ Indeed, voters may use the European elections to « punish » their party

⁸³ VAN DER EIJK, Cees, FRANKLIN, Mark, OPPENHUIS, Eric, pp. 332–65.

⁸⁴ BLONDEL, Jean, SINNOTT, Richard, SVENSSON, Palle, « Representation and Voter Participation. », *European Journal of Political Research*, 1997, Vol.32, n°2, pp. 243–72.

⁸⁵ FERRARA, Federico, WEISHAUPT, J. Timo, “Get Your Act Together: Party Performance in European Parliament Elections.” *European Union Politics*, 2004, Vol.5, n°3, pp.283–306.

⁸⁶ VAN DER EIJK, Cees, FRANKLIN, Mark, OPPENHUIS, Eric, pp. 332–365.

or to give smaller parties the chance to win seats that they would otherwise fail to win at national level. Moreover, European voting behaviour should not be seen as absolutely negative. If we consider it from another point of view, we can also say that the voting community shows, through its vote, its support for the European Union, its bodies, and its integration. This theory of small party winners and large party losers helps to explain almost « 40% of the apparent volatility observed between national and supranational elections »⁸⁷, as stated by, Simon Hix and Michael Marsh tell us. Furthermore, their studies and analyses on the subject have argued that anti-EU parties always perform better than average. This shows us that the character of the vote to sanction national governments takes precedence over the character of the challenge to the EU itself.⁸⁸

Finally, Nicolas Sauger proposed the theory of « retrospective voting » which is built on the idea that annual results and outcomes matter in voting decisions. Hindsight voting should then affect support for national power more strongly than support for the EU. Authors test this hypothesis by analysing voters' reactions to three issues: unemployment, immigration, and climate change, and observe whether their opinions and voting behaviour are related.⁸⁹

One of the problems with this second-order election approach, as expressed by Schakel and Jeffery, is that despite the fact that this theory has been greatly developed and refined over time, it remains the dominant approach when it comes to analysing European Parliament elections as the only ones with explanatory power. However, the concern arises when we transfer a nationalised concept for the study of European elections to the study of regional elections. There is therefore a risk of assuming that all forms of elections are subordinated to national politics and that the national level is the only one that matters.⁹⁰

Jeffery and Hough summarise the contributions of an edited collection on regional elections in Germany, Italy and Belgium in particular and their general conclusion is that the majority of sub-State elections appear to be second-order

⁸⁷ HIX, Simon, MARSH, Michael, pp. 496-497.

⁸⁸ HIX, Simon, MARSH, Michael, pp. 496-497.

⁸⁹ SAUGER, Nicolas, pp. 21-47.

⁹⁰ SCHAKEL, Arjan H., JEFFERY, Charlie, pp. 323-34.

elections influenced by State-level voting considerations. But there may also be self-fulfilling prophecies at play and the results of the analysis may well depend on the question being asked.

There are then three perspectives proposed by different authors on issues related to European elections as second-order elections that can bring additional insights into the study of regional elections. The first is that the criteria for defining second-order elections at the level of the European Parliament are not necessarily applied in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe that have joined the EU as it has expanded. These new States have experienced new phenomena of territorial regionalisation within each country and as such, these new regions may introduce new types of electoral behaviour. The second perspective argues that, now that the stakes in European Parliament elections are higher and the scope of the EU has expanded, voters vote much more with their own assessment of European issues in mind, while still taking national issues into account. Finally, the third perspective focuses on the classical hypothesis that parties in power at national level are impacted and penalised during European elections because the composition of the government is not at stake. Indeed, in various member States where the party system is fragmented and where the logic is multi-party, the European elections will have very little impact on the electoral results of national elections. However, we can then argue that it is in party systems with a bipolar tendency, where the alternation of power is recurrent, that we observe a higher rate of influence between national and European elections. The same logic could therefore be applied to the relationship between regional and national elections. Therefore, when national elections are not of the first order to determine the composition of the government, regional elections will not be of the second-order.⁹¹

Thanks to this state of the literature on the theory of second-order elections, we were able to note that beyond the verification and confirmation of the major criteria that define what a second-order election is, some fewer classic hypotheses have been brought up and verified or not. During our case analysis,

⁹¹ *Ibidem.*

we will have to remain vigilant about the aspects taken into account and the results studied.

IV. CASE STUDY: THE NATIONAL FRONT IN FRANCE AND THE NORTHERN LEAGUE IN ITALY

After presenting our state of the art that allowed us to contextualize our subject of study in the current literature, and after defining the terms we are employing in this work, we will proceed to the analysis of our case study.

As previously mentioned, our analysis focuses on two case studies, namely the extreme right-wing parties National Front in France and the Northern League in Italy. We will first review the history of each party and their ideology and offer an overview of their main electoral results and internal changes. Although both parties are categorised as far-right parties, it is important to try to distinguish their specificities and to outline their differences and similarities. Sometimes populist, sometimes nationalist, various qualifiers have been applied to these parties without ever really obtaining a clear and precise but above all universal definition. Analysing the evolution over time of these parties will allow us to understand certain passages of their existence. If we refer to the theory, the life of the extreme right-wing parties has known four phases of change. The first one starts directly after the Second World War, and we perceive still very fascist and Nazi tendencies that persist. The parties that we can see rising in the political scene in this period are small entities that are still very little known, if at all, on the national and international political scene. One party, which we can mention, and which illustrates this period, is none other than the *Movimento Sociale Italiano*. Indeed, this party was the direct successor of Mussolini's party and ideology.⁹² From the mid-1950s onwards, the second phase arrived, which was very different from the previous one. Klaus Von Beyme described it as a «

⁹² WIDFELDT, Anders, "A fourth phase of the extreme right? Nordic immigration critical parties in a comparative context." *Nordeuropa forum*, 2010, Vol.1, n°2, pp 12-13.

populist protest »⁹³. The parties in this phase have almost nothing in common with the parties of the interwar period and militate against certain social and economic developments according to national policies. One of the parties that marks this phase is the one of Pierre Poujade, the investigator of the populist movement Poujadism, which, as we recall, is a movement that fights for the defense of merchants and artisans against the State, a revolt of the « small » against the « big ». At that time, binary discrepancies were a commonly used practice to qualify adversities between two parties. It was at this point that we saw again the appearance of single-personality parties, those with a big party leader, a charismatic personality as it was during the Leninism. Following binary waves of comparison, the speeches of this type of party in this second phase tend to oppose the people against the State, the poor and the excluded society of minorities against the big owners of the world. The third phase begins in the 1980s and offers two new components: the emergence of the debate on immigration; a debate that structures the majority of far-right parties, representing a big part of their programs and speeches, and electoral support (campaign financing, etc.). This time, the emblematic party of this period is the National Front in France, chaired by Jean-Marie Le Pen. It was one of the first parties of the radical right to gain international visibility and recognition, thanks to Le Pen's leadership. Other parties such as the Vlaams Blok in Belgium or the Northern League in Italy are also right-wing parties, particularly in terms of their economic policy but also in terms of their social policy with the issue of immigration. These third-phase parties have been particularly successful in making themselves known to the media. Indeed, they have an important place and an increased visibility which allows them not only to break through on the political scene but also to obtain a place in their government, given by the media. Finally, the fourth and last phase, proposed by Van Beyme and Widfeldt, begins in the 2000s. Until then, it was unthinkable for the public to see a party from the far-right rise into power. This fourth phase, described as the « legitimacy phase », is the moment when these famous parties start to integrate the different national governments. We will see in particular the arrival of Jean-Marie Le Pen

⁹³ VON BEYME, Klaus, "Right-wing extremism in post-war Europe", *West European Politics*, 1988, Vol.11, n°2, pp. 12-14.

in the second round of the presidential elections in France in 2002 for the first time in history. During this phase, the party programmes move towards a growing nationalism, described as « welfare chauvinism »⁹⁴ by Widfeldt. On the migration discourse side, criticism of immigration is increasingly present and is now more focused on the « Islamisation of Europe ». On the other hand, with regards to the perception of Europe among European citizens, some forms of Euroscepticism are progressively emerging.

A. From the New Order to the National Gathering: the National Front

Named the National Front (NF), or more correctly *le Front National pour l'Unité Française* (*National Front for the French Unity*), until 2018, this far-right French political party was officially founded in October 1972 as an initiative launched by *l'Ordre Nouveau* (a nationalist and far-right movement of the late 1960s in France, literally translated as the New Order). The NF itself was chaired by Jean-Marie Le Pen since his foundation until 2011; the presidency was taken over by his daughter in 2011: Marine Le Pen, who still holds it until today. Indeed, this party was born from the idea, which the New Order (NO) movement undertook, of creating a « gathering of the national right » bringing together militants from Petainist or neo-Nazi movements with the aim of obtaining votes in the 1973 national legislative elections. As Erwan Lecœur notes, the New Order « wanted to make the rally that took shape at the end of the year (1972) the French counterpart of the success of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI). The tricolour flame (logo of the National Front), as well as part of the programme, are copied from the MSI. »⁹⁵ The MSI was one of the most powerful far-right parties in Europe and can be described as « the far-right transalpine party that is raising hopes in France »⁹⁶.

⁹⁴ WIDFELDT, Anders, pp 21-26.

⁹⁵ LECOEUR, Erwan, « Chapter 1. 1972-1982 : la « traversée du désert » », dans : , *Un néo-populisme à la française. Trente ans de Front national*, sous la direction de Lecœur Erwan. Paris, La Découverte, « Cahiers libres », 2003, p. 29-47.

⁹⁶ LEBOURG, N., PREDA, J., « Ordre Nouveau, fin des illusions droitières et matrice activiste du premier Front National /New order, end of illusions and the activist matrix of the first national front », *Studia Historica.Historia Contemporanea*, 2012, Vol.30, p211.

There is therefore the idea to create a National Front, a unique legal party.⁹⁷ Indeed, there is the willing to achieve the goal of the New Order to become the unifying party of the French right. As Jean-Yves Camus highlighted, the difficulty to achieve this goal at that time is that there are, inside the national right, two ideological opposed cultures; the revolutionary one, promoted by the New Order and the one from the Poujadism movement.⁹⁸ The New Order was the main extreme right-wing movement in France after the Second World War. Its primary aim was to import the strong far-right movement into the national political scene. It was this movement that demonstrated its ideologies against the communist left in the streets of Paris in the early 1970s. It was only after its dissolution by the French State and after the first few years of Jean-Marie Le Pen's presidency that the New Order managed to « reshape its image as a turbulent and factious “école de cadre” of the governmental right » in the proper words of Nicolas Lebourg and Jonathan Preda⁹⁹. This party is thus in search of « giving birth to a popular revolution » according to the party's chart, a violent movement determined to impose its regime and its ideas in France.¹⁰⁰

The advent and continuity of the National Front's existence can be summarised, as proposed by Pascal Delwitte in his book « Le Front National, mutations de l'extrême-droite française », in four phases. The first phase corresponds to the period between the birth of the party and its first electoral breakthrough in the 1983 municipal elections. The second one, which laid the foundations and ensured the party's constancy, ended with its split in December 1998 with the « Mégret affair ». The third phase was marked by the weakening of the NF despite the arrival of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the second round of the 2002 presidential elections. Finally the fourth and final phase is set by the succession of Marine Le Pen to the presidency of the party in 2011, and the party's rise in the opinion polls, which has been gradual but sure.¹⁰¹ While this first period is favourable to a rather extreme right-wing, which has its origins in « revolutionary nationalism » (neo-fascist ideology), the future president of the

⁹⁷ KAUFFMANN, Grégoire, « Les origines du Front national », *Pouvoirs*, 2016/2 (N° 157), pp5-15.

⁹⁸ CAMUS, Jean-Yves, « Chapitre 1. Origine et formation du front national (1972-1981) », dans : Nonna Mayer éd., *Le Front national à découvert*. Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, « Références », 1996, p. 17-36.

⁹⁹ LEBOURG, N., PREDA, J., p206.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p217.

¹⁰¹ DELWITTE, Pascal, *Le Front National : mutations de l'extrême droite française*, Bruxelles, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2012, p11.

party, Jean-Marie Le Pen, appears to be a supporter of a more moderate right. According to Pascal Perrineau, the electoral rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the 1980s « was based, to a large extent, on the current of political protest that ran through the right-wing electorate at the time and on the questions that plagued the large French urban concentrations confronted with the rise of insecurity and the development of immigration »¹⁰². Moreover, the objective behind the choice of this man as president is twofold: to choose a candidate who is not directly connected to the various roots of the NF but also to have a candidate who is experienced in politics. Indeed, Jean-Marie Le Pen is not new to politics, since, apart from having volunteered in various wars, he was a Poujadist deputy in the mid-1950s.¹⁰³ So here he is, launched in his career as party president, but above all launched as the new hero present to bring in the French far-right and its sympathizers.

We will now be able to observe and better understand the story of the party and its hero through a cross-sectional analysis of national and European electoral results from 1973 to the 2019 elections. However, having seen what the far-right is and its characteristics, and having had a brief overview of the origins of the party, we can already observe trends and aspects that suggest that the National Front can be qualified as a far-right party. Indeed, if we refer to Perrineau's words, Le Pen's growing popularity is due in particular to the political and social context of the time that crosses the right-wing electorate, but also to migration issues, which are, as we will see in the rest of this work, at the heart of the party's discourse.

After the defeat of the 1973's legislative elections, we observe that the party has obtained less than 2% of the votes except for Jean-Marie Le Pen who got more, alone, than 5% of the votes in Paris. The party would struggle to gain popularity among both voters and members during the first ten years of its existence. But more importantly, the party is struggling to find its way among the large traditional parties already established. It was at this time that the *Parti*

¹⁰² PERRINEAU, Pascal, *La France au Front : Essai sur l'avenir du Front national*, Paris, Fayard, 2014, p.88.

¹⁰³ The Poujadist movement was a movement in the early 1950s that arose from a rural revolt by French artisans and shopkeepers against tax inspectors and aimed to defend their rights against the rise of the French food industry.

des Forces Nouvelles was created following dissidences within the younger generation of the party. Indeed, Le Pen's defeat in the elections shook things up and internal debates arose, causing the death of the NO. However, as Nicolas Lebourg and Jonathan Preda explain in their article, « Never again will French neo-fascism manage to hold the streets and make the news as it did in the days of the New Order. While the nationalists were convinced that a monolithic party of professional revolutionaries was needed to resurrect the French far-right, it was finally the nationalist Jean-Marie le Pen, sole master of the National Front after the summer of 1973, who was in a position to take up this challenge. »¹⁰⁴ Subsequently, the results of the presidential election were just as bad and, contrary to what one might have thought, gave Jean-Marie Le Pen a boost. Indeed, he will undertake structural changes in the party and thematic commissions will be created. This will allow him to develop the party to some extent, to get it out of the shadows but above all, to obtain support, credibility, and legitimacy.

During the legislative elections of 1978, the party does not obtain more than 0,9% of the electoral results and, for the European elections of 1979, the party does not even run and leaves the place to its rival, the *Parti des Forces Nouvelles*. The promise of less than 10 years ago to establish the French far-right on the national political scene has therefore not been kept for the moment.¹⁰⁵ Thereafter, the party slowly began to achieve results in some of its strongholds and gradually made its mark through by-elections. As the media coverage of the party increased, the populist dimension of the party, putting the citizen in a hero costume, was revealed. The aim is to counter the established parliamentary and political « elite ». In June 1984, the National Front made a breakthrough in the European elections with almost 11% of the results, which enabled the party to obtain 11 seats in parliament. According to Pascal Perrineau, this marked the real arrival in politics, particularly at the European level, for the National Front. Some will justify this rise by a current fever of nationalist right-wing movements as others may simply explain it through internal level factors.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ LEBOURG, N., PREDA, J., p229.

¹⁰⁵ DELWITTE, Pascal, pp16-17.

¹⁰⁶ PERRINEAU, Pascal, pp.96-102

And it is in 1986, at the time of legislative elections that the party, under the Group National Front – *Rassemblement National*, finally joins the national assembly. These gathering counts two lists including two far-right groups that rise to a clear success at the time with 35 deputies and in the process gets, for the first time in the party's history, its first mayor. Le Pen will then obtain a score of 14% during the first round of the presidential election in 1988. From the beginning of the 1990s onwards, the FN grew in strength, thanks in particular to the development of its anti-corruption campaigns and its denunciation of the alleged abuses of the major traditional parties. It set a record in the 1997 legislative elections, passing the second round in more than 100 constituencies in the country, a first.¹⁰⁷ Le Pen also manages to increase its membership through its speeches. It is relevant to quickly note here the importance of the membership in the French political and partisan dynamics. French electors are known to have a pronounced culture of membership and when a party grows in member volume, it is rather important – at some extent, more symbolic that elections result themselves. Some even mention « party democracy » when qualifying France.¹⁰⁸ The speeches that led to an increase of National Front members advocate rather racist ideas, expressing ones such as Le Pen's belief in the inequality of races or his minimisation of the concentration camps during the Second World War. He was fined 10,000 euros for inciting racial hatred.¹⁰⁹ Late 90's, various internal changes in the party are gradually taking place. First of all, there is the problem with Bruno Mégret (former delegate general of the party). Since Jean-Marie Le Pen is ineligible for one year due to a legal conviction, the question arises as to who will lead the list for the 1999 European elections. Indeed, he is a right-wing politician and former active activist of the « *Rassemblement Pour la République* », and he is perceived as less flexible on certain issues (notably migration policies) but more liberal than Mr Le Pen on the economic framework. There will therefore be two internal « clans »: the Lepenists and the Megretists. As a consequence, a split will be perceptible in the party in 1998 and Bruno Mégret will create his own party: the « *Mouvement National Républicain* » (MNR). So,

¹⁰⁷ LEGRAND, Baptiste, « 60 députés FN à l'Assemblée en 2017? », *L'Obs*, 22 Juin 2016, 1p.

¹⁰⁸ LAURENT, Olivier, « Ambiguïtés de la démocratisation partisane en France (PS, RPR, UMP) », *Revue française de science politique*, vol. 53, n°5, 2003, pp. 761-790.

¹⁰⁹ DELWITTE, Pascal, p23.

for the 1999's European elections, the FN states a decrease of more than 5% and obtains only 5 seats. And so, it will be the European elections of June 1999, led by Bruno Mégret, where we will observe a low score with more or less than 3% against more than 5% for the FN party.¹¹⁰ Later on, to everyone's surprise, Jean-Marie Le Pen reached the second round of the 2002 presidential elections with 16.86% of the votes, i.e., over 4 million voters. This was the first time that a far-right candidate reached the second round of the French presidential election. On his side, Bruno Mégret will get the score of 2,34%. At the same time, various anti-National Front demonstrations took place, but above all, Jacques Chirac, the opposing candidate, refused to take part in the traditional second round presidential debate. Chirac won the elections, and Jean-Marie Le Pen obtained the lowest score recorded in the second round of the presidential elections, i.e., 17.79% of the votes. Subsequently, the FN saw a significant drop in its electorate as well as in its popularity for several years, both in the legislative and presidential elections of 2007.¹¹¹ It was only when Marine Le Pen, Jean-Marie Le Pen's daughter, became president of the party in January 2011 that the trend was reversed, and the party regained more pronounced support. In fact, as soon as she took over the « throne », the party had more than 20,000 members.¹¹² It is still important to underline the « achievements » of his father, who presided over a national party for 38 years and took part in five presidential elections. The new president then made some shifts in the party line with a more liberal approach than her father on the economic front and a more Muslim-oriented discourse in particular on migration policy. As Pascal Perrineau states, the fear is no longer only towards the « gauchio-lepéniste ».¹¹³ Marine Le Pen is running for presidential elections in 2012 but the road to get there is full of obstacles. Indeed, according to her supporters, the candidate is struggling to obtain the 500 signatures¹¹⁴ of elected representatives required to participate in the elections. She then went to the Council of State in order to obtain the mandatory anonymity

¹¹⁰ PERRAULT, Guillaume, « scission d'un parti : le précédent du FN », *Le Figaro*, 23 Novembre 2012, 1p.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹² Le Monde avec Reuters, « Marine Le Pen devient officiellement présidente du Front National », *Le Monde*, 16 Janvier 2011, 1p.

¹¹³ DELWITTE, Pascal, p34.

¹¹⁴ *L'express*, AFP, « Marine Le Pen à la chasse aux signatures », *L'express*, 11 janvier 2012, 1p.

of sponsorships, but she was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, she obtained the required and most valuable signatures.¹¹⁵

In order to constitute a political group at the European Parliament just after the European elections of 2014, the party tried to gather some similar parties from the European Union with the same ideology and therefore, an alliance with the Northern League is established. The results of the European elections of 2014 are clear: the NF leads the group for the first time with just over 24% of the votes and thus obtains 24 seats. In 2017, Marine Le Pen has arrived at second round of the presidential elections against Emmanuel Macron with 33,90% of the votes. Following these elections, many internal debates are emerging or resurfacing. Indeed, the party is divided in two at the ideological level with on the one hand the identitarian and conservative members and on the other hand those who wish to make a clean sweep of the past and re-found the identity of the party.¹¹⁶ This will lead to an internal split, the departure of Florian Philippot, number two of the party and a loss of supporter's equivalent to the one that occurred during the late 1990s. Furthermore, the party declares that Marine Le Pen will no longer lead the FN list in the 2019 European elections.¹¹⁷ In the wake of this latest internal turmoil, the party president is taking the opportunity to circulate a « form » of questions to her members in order to establish a new course of action and change the internal organisation to ensure a party that gets closer, in terms of representation but also profiles to its members. New statutes were then put in place and a change of name took place, with the National Front becoming the *Rassemblement National*, still under Marine's presidency. Concerning the 2019 European elections, Marine Le Pen chose to put a young prodigy of the party, Jordan Bardella¹¹⁸, to lead the list. The party will then obtain 23.3% of the vote and 23 elected members in the European Parliament. There was a slight drop in results but, on the other hand, an increase in voter turnout compared to the 2014 European elections.¹¹⁹ Beyond the historical description and in order to

¹¹⁵ Le point pour Reuters, « Marine Le Pen saisit le Conseil d'État sur les parrainages », *Le Point*, 22 décembre 2011, 1p.

¹¹⁶ Le Monde, « Florian Philippot annonce qu'il quitte le Front National », *Le Monde*, 21 septembre 2017, 1p.

¹¹⁷ FOCRAUD, Arnaud, « Florian Philippot sera-t-il le Mégret de Marine Le Pen ? », *Le journal du dimanche*, 22 septembre 2017, 1p.

¹¹⁸ 20 minutes avec AFP, « Européennes : Jordan Bardella choisi pour conduire la liste du Rassemblement National », *20 minutes*, 7 Janvier 2019, 1p.

¹¹⁹ SOULLIER, Lucie, « Le Rassemblement National condamné au renouvellement des visages, pas du discours », *Le Monde*, 7 janvier 2019, 1p.

introduce the next themes of this work, we can say that the NF is seen as a « referent » party in terms of the development of the extreme right in Europe. While most of the right-wing parties that emerged in the early 1980s tended to base their programs and policies on the neo-fascist traditions of the interwar period, the FN has been able to distinguish itself through its electoral experience and prowess, as well as through its media presence and public discourse. The importance and monopole of the Le Pen name also allowed to keep its recognition among the French voters throughout several generations.

Hereby, we can illustrate the previous mentioned electoral results by using a table figuring the results of the NF for the European elections by year, expressed in percentage, ranking, number of seats, and its group in the Parliament¹²⁰ also best interpreted with participation rated.¹²¹

Year	Percentage of votes	Ranking	Number of seats	Parliament's group
1984	10,95%	4 th	10/81	DR (<i>Droites Européennes – European Right</i>)
1989	11,73%	3 rd	10/81	DR (<i>Droites Européennes – European Right</i>)
1994	10,52%	3 rd	11/87	NI (<i>Non-Inscrit – Non-Listed</i>)
1999	5,69%	6 th	5/87	TDI (<i>Groupe Technique des Députés Indépendants</i>)
2004	9,81%	4 th	7/78	NI (<i>Non-Inscrit – Non-Listed</i>)
2009	6,30%	6 th	3/72	NI (<i>Non-Inscrit – Non-Listed</i>)
2014	24,86%	1 st	23/74	NI (<i>Non-Inscrit – Non-Listed</i>)
2019	23,34%	1 st	22/74	ID (<i>Identité et Démocratie</i>)

¹²⁰ Europarl, « results of european elections », *European Parliament Website*, page consulted on the September 15 of 2021, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/fr/resultats-nationaux/france/1984-1989/session-constitutive/>

¹²¹ Tables in appendix

Beyond the previously emphasized great importance and the irrefutable place that the name Le Pen has taken when talking about the National Front, a name that surpasses all the quarrels and obstacles that the party has seen, its speeches and ideologies of the latter have evolved and changed over time. Moving from the father's to the daughter's vision, it is interesting to highlight certain criteria and ideological aspects of the party. This will also allow us to see if this party can indeed be qualified as an extreme right-wing party or not.

Since the first steps of the party into the political chessboard, Jean-Marie Le Pen refuted the name extreme right and asked that his party be referred to as the radical right. In an interview in 1972, he said « Yes, we are the right, we are the popular right [...] the social right which does not separate the love of the fatherland from the love of its people, we are also the national right for which the cult of the fatherland is the highest form of solidarity between the men of our people [...]»¹²² (Jean-Marie Le Pen, 1972).

Her daughter also rejected the term as an insult. In an interview, she claimed that she preferred to use the term « national-populism ». For her, even if this expression is pejorative, it makes it possible to group together the parties which are in opposition to the European Union project and which are in favour of restoring the borders and sovereignty of the States.¹²³

As seen throughout the history of the party, it is during the 1980s that it certainly takes off, but it is also during these years that Jean-Marie Le Pen holds rather shocking speeches as head and most important public figure of the party, which will earn him court convictions. We can notably underline his slip when he minimised the gas chambers of the Second World War. It is a speech that Marine Le Pen will take up a few years later and to which she will firmly oppose, as well as her father for the time being.

When we dig deeper at interpreting the attitudes, values promoted and speeches discoursed by the members of the party, we can outline all the evolution

¹²² Original traduction: « Oui, nous sommes la droite, nous sommes la droite populaire [...] la droite sociale qui ne sépare pas l'amour de la patrie de l'amour de son peuple, nous sommes aussi la droite nationale pour qui le culte de la patrie est la forme la plus élevée de la solidarité entre les hommes de notre peuple [...] »

¹²³ RENOU, « Même si le terme « national-populisme » est aussi utilisé de manière péjorative, j'en accepte l'expression », *l'Hémicycle*, 15 octobre 2013, 1p.

of the relationship with the European Union. From the early days of the party until the 1990s, the FN and Jean-Marie Le Pen had a positive attitude towards the EU. Indeed, they asked for the introduction of a common currency, a common anti-terrorist policy, a European judicial area, and a common foreign policy. This was the period of the advent of the EU with even fewer than 15 member countries on board. It was not until the beginning of the 1990s, when the Maastricht Treaty was signed, that the switch in their positions towards the EU took place. For the party chairman, there was no longer any question of accepting a Europe that he described as « federalist ». It was from this moment on that the party moved into the « Eurosceptic » camp.

If we refer to the speeches and slogans of the electoral NF's campaigns, we can notably talk about the slogan for the presidential election of 2017 which was « in the name of the people », which reflects the populist side.¹²⁴

The author Cécile Alduy draws a distinction between the speeches of the father and the daughter and underlines that if Jean-Marie Le Pen's speeches tend to be « limpid and carrying a vision of the World of an extreme coherence », those of his daughter tend to be more complicated to understand and « require decoding ». In addition to this, Igounet adds that Marine Le Pen has not necessarily changed the substance of her father's speeches but has rather made a change in vocabulary.¹²⁵

Indeed, Valérie Igounet, a historian specialised in the French far-right, has analysed the party's slogans from its creation to the present day. Her analysis shows that one of the main markers of the NF's ideology is the link between national identity and immigration.¹²⁶ Immigration is one of the party's main struggles. Moreover, most of the party's speeches and slogans tend to emphasise the France of yesterday, its customs and habits, its Catholic origins and traditions. And as a result, it considers the EU to be an obstacle to France's development and security.

¹²⁴ GROSS, Estelle, « Marine Le Pen change de slogan : 'une ligne populiste assumée' », *L'Obs*, 19 septembre 2016, 1p.

¹²⁵ IGOUNET, Valérie, *Les français d'abord. Slogans et viralité du discours Front National (1972-2017)*, Inculte, 2017, Paris, p.33.

¹²⁶ IGOUNET, Valérie, p.9.

Finally, to conclude our analysis of the National Front political party, we will look at the party's official website and see what it proposes and conveys as ideas.

If we go deeper into the party's official website and analyse their thematic publications as well as their archive of projects for the 2017 presidential election, some facts are directly brought to our attention. The first thumbnail we see is of a proposed law entitled « combating Islamist ideologies » and the thumbnail next to it proposes « facing Islamist separatism, recovering the indivisibility of the Republic and the unity of the nation ». There are other projects that deal with « security everywhere and for everyone » or the « Le Pen plan for the suburbs ». We will therefore analyse these projects in a transversal way in order to highlight the main trends and ideologies carried by the party. The first major point concerns the issue of Islam. The project is summarised as follows:

This legal proposal aims to prevent any direct or indirect funding of these ideologies or the infiltration of Islamists into the civil service. It provides business leaders with measures to prevent the infiltration of Islamists in their companies. It also provides a means to keep foreign Islamists out of French territory, to dissolve organisations promoting Islamist ideologies and to close down public places, including places of worship, in which these ideologies are disseminated. It also includes a ban on Islamist clothing in public spaces, and frames architectural law to prevent the promotion of Islamist ideologies, and also block access of Islamists to elective office. The legal proposal amends the penal code to make an attachment with the Islamist ideology an aggravating circumstance and thereby create a penalty of national indignity for Islamists.¹²⁷¹²⁸

¹²⁷ RASSEMBLEMENT NATIONAL, *proposition de loi : combattre les idéologies islamistes*, site internet du Rassemblement National, 32p.

¹²⁸ Original traduction : « Cette proposition de loi vise à empêcher tout financement direct ou indirect de ces idéologies ou encore l'infiltration des islamistes dans la fonction publique. Elle donne des outils aux chefs d'entreprise pour éviter l'infiltration des islamistes dans leur entreprise. Elle permet également à éloigner du territoire français les étrangers islamistes, de dissoudre les organisations défendant les idéologies islamistes et de fermer les lieux recevant du public, y compris de culte, dans lesquelles sont manifestées ou diffusées ces idéologies. On y retrouve également l'interdiction dans l'espace public des tenues islamistes, l'encadrement du droit architectural pour empêcher la promotion des idéologies islamistes ou encore l'impossibilité d'accès aux fonctions électives aux islamistes. La proposition de loi modifie le code pénal pour faire de l'attachement à l'idéologie islamiste une circonstance aggravante ainsi que pour créer une peine d'indignité nationale pour les islamistes. »

We are therefore already able to point out a total rejection of all aspects of Islam, from near or far. The rejection of the other is therefore accentuated even more following the attacks in Paris on the November 13th of 2015, and those perpetrated in Europe as in Brussels in March 2016 among others. As we have seen in the history of the party that one of the differences between the father and daughter Le Pen is the rejection not of foreigners but the rejection of Islamists at the heart of the party's ideology, this is another aspect that characterises the ideology of the extreme right. Moreover, the party never ceases to use the French President Emmanuel Macron's speech « the Islamist threat » to justify and accentuate the importance of its programs and legislative proposals. It uses this phrase in its two manifestos « Faced with Islamist separatism, recover the indivisibility of the Republic and the unity of the nation » and the one mentioned above, « combating Islamist ideologies ».

Concerning her « white paper on security for all and everywhere », Marine Le Pen once again asserts clear-cut values regarding « street crime ». She introduces her manifesto as follows:

After the terrible security report presented in the first part of this work, the result of an abandonment of all political will and the predominance, for nearly 40 years now, of policies favouring a social treatment of crime and delinquency, this white paper is the starting point for a new start and a re-conquest: - first of all, of minds, by breaking with lax policies that the French population profoundly rejects; - secondly, of territories gangrened by disastrous crime, causing the fragmentation of our society. The measures and proposals described in this white paper are intended to be operational, dissuasive and, above all, based on common sense.

They constitute a framework for strengthening or rebuilding, as the case may be, the two institutions that guarantee the effective exercise of our freedoms, and therefore of our democracy: the police and justice. In fact, what really means our democracy if the French cannot move without risking an attack? To live in a neighbourhood on a daily basis without being threatened by criminal traffickers? Without seeing one's home or workplace constantly at risk of burglary? Without seeing one's children robbed by unscrupulous "minors"? This new start must finally result in mayors, magistrates, police officers, gendarmes, in short, all the forces that guarantee the security of French people on a daily basis while having the necessary human, material and legal measures to enable

*them to carry out their mission normally. So that the right to security, mentioned in Article 2 of the Declaration of Human Rights, finally becomes a reality.*¹²⁹¹³⁰

These extracts from speeches, manifestos, quotations and other documents are only a small part of the statements and ideologies conveyed by the FN and which allow us, in addition to the scientific analyses and research produced and proposed in this work, to affirm that the National Front is a party of the extreme right, of the radical right, or any other qualifier encompassed in the definition of extreme right-wing party. Moreover, they also allow us to see the policies, points of debate and struggles that the party advocates and wishes to bring about if elected, at the national and or European level.

B. « Lega Nord » or the creation and the blossoming of the Italian far-right: The Northern League

The context in which the League emerged remains important to underline. Indeed, it is not new to learn of the existence of the center-periphery debate in Italy, but above all that of the opposition between the « industrialised » North and the « agricultural » South. The economic, cultural, and social disparities that differentiate them have been present at least since Italian unification. However, it is important to point out that even if this opposition is still very tangible, it was not felt in the party system. According to Lipset and Rokkan, this cleavage in the Italian State was foreseen and taken into account during the State and party

¹²⁹ RASSEMBLEMENT NATIONAL, *livre blanc sur la sécurité. La sécurité partout et pour tous*, site internet du Rassemblement National, février 2020, 76p.

¹³⁰ Original traduction : « *Après le terrible constat sécuritaire présenté dans la première partie, résultat d'un abandon de toute volonté politique et de la prééminence, depuis 40 ans bientôt, de politiques privilégiant un traitement social du crime et de la délinquance, ce livre blanc est le point de départ d'un sursaut et d'une reconquête: - celle d'abord des esprits, en rompant avec des politiques laxistes que rejettent profondément les Français - celle de territoires gangrenés par une criminalité désastreuse, provoquant la fragmentation de notre société. Les mesures et propositions décrites dans ce livre blanc se veulent opérationnelles, dissuasives et surtout frappées au coin du bon sens. Elles constituent une armature pour conforter ou refonder selon le cas, les deux institutions garantes de l'exercice effectif de nos libertés, donc de notre démocratie: la force publique et la justice. De fait, quel est le contenu réel de notre démocratie, si les Français ne peuvent se mouvoir sans risquer une agression? Vivre au quotidien dans un quartier, sans subir la menace de trafiquants criminels? Sans voir sa maison ou son lieu de travail soumis en permanence au risque du cambriolage? Sans voir ses enfants rackettés par des "mineurs" sans scrupules? Ce sursaut doit enfin aboutir à ce que maires, magistrats, policiers, gendarmes, bref, toutes les forces assurant au quotidien la sécurité des Français, disposent des moyens humains, matériels et juridiques, leur permettant d'exercer normalement leurs missions. Ce, pour que le droit à la sûreté, mentionné à l'article 2 de la Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme, devienne enfin une réalité* »

formation of the country. It was only from the 1970s onwards that new opportunities arose for « new », non-traditional parties to appear on the political scene. It was in this context that the ancestor of the idea of the League party was born, and it was as a result of the economic disparities between the North and the South that the party was created with nationalist speeches advocating self-determination.¹³¹

Officially called « *Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania* », the Northern League (NL) is an Italian party founded in 1989 (but becoming an official party in 1991) by Umberto Bossi but becomes an official party in 1991. It originated from a grouping of regionalist movements, the Lombardy League (*Lega Lombarda*) and the Veneto League (*Lega Veneta*). In fact, the fusion of these regional leagues, carrying the discourses and demands of the « productive classes », allowed the Northern League to become one of the main actors of the changes in the Italian political scene, changes that were amplified following the « Clean Hands »¹³² operation (*Mani pulite* in Italian).

Originally, the party used to campaign for the independence of Padania, the northern and continental part of the country, but has now changed its position and is campaigning, among other things, for fiscal federalism. Indeed, the independence of the Northern regions and especially their self-determination is a struggle that has gone back and forth in the party's objectives. We will see later in this section some of the reasons why this movement militated for their independence. Their case can be compared to the ones of Catalonia or Flanders, although there are major differences. At this time, there is also the flow of internal migration from the South to the North which has largely diminished; the arrival of « extra-EU » workers will reverse the trend in the country. Indeed, between 1991 and 2005, the Italian foreign population increased from 0.6% to 5.2% share of the total population¹³³. It is important to notify this element since one of the main points of the party's current programme is the fight against

¹³¹ GOMEZ-REINO CACHAFEIRO, Margarita, « La Lega Nord. Mobilisation et revendication du "nationalisme padan" », *Pôle Sud*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2004, pp. 133-146.

¹³² The operation "Clean Hands" grew out of a series of judicial investigations in the early 1990s that focused on Italian politicians. They brought to light the system of corruption and illegal financing of Italian parties. They also provoked a wave of public indignation and the disappearance of some parties (Christian Democratic Party, Socialist Party, etc.)

¹³³ *Ibidem*.

immigration and the flow of migrants arriving in Italy in particular and the way this has been and is still managed by the EU.

After making a not unnoticed entry into the Italian political scene, the party has managed to steer its course to arrive in government in 1994.¹³⁴ At the same time, Silvio Berlusconi and his party Forza Italia (FI) entered the same electoral area in force. For this reason, Bossi chose to form a coalition, proposed by Berlusconi, that would allow them to win the 1996 Italian legislative elections. The party thus increased its influence in Rome.

So, after a rather flamboyant period of launching into politics, and following the failure of the Berlusconi government in 1995, the Italian Right managed to climb the ladder and obtained a new coalition with Forza Italia (FI) and Alleanza Nazionale (AN). This allowed the League to remain in government. It should also be noted that during its expansion phase, the party, which can be described as a solidarity and voluntary movement making it a small party, had almost 40,000 members, mostly from the North.¹³⁵ What penalises the party, apart from its size, is that its success is only concentrated in the North of Italy and it does not manage to break through in the big metropolises and urban areas of the rest of the country as Forza Italia and *Alleanza Nazionale* do. At this point, the League still advocates the independence of Padania but reserves a prominent place in its programme for its anti-immigration policy and mobilisation.¹³⁶ Although the party struggled to maintain its place in institutional power, it managed to make its mark and won votes at regional level in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The Northern League's relationship with Europe and its institutions goes back even before its creation. Already in the 1989 European elections, the party born of a federation of autonomist unions in the North of the country had

¹³⁴ RAYNER, Hervé, « La Ligue de Matteo Salvini et l'« environnementalisme de salon » : entre indifférence, hostilité et intérêt aux enjeux écologiques », *La Pensée écologique*, 2019, volume 2, n° 4, pp31 – 44.

¹³⁵ GOMEZ-REINO, M., « Ethnicity and Nationalism in Italian Politics, Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the Northern Question », *Research Series on Migration and Ethnic Relations*, Ashgate, 2001.

¹³⁶ GOMEZ-REINO CACHAFEIRO, Margarita, « La Lega Nord. Mobilisation et revendication du "nationalisme padan" », *Pôle Sud*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2004, pp. 133-146.

obtained scores and it was thanks to this party in particular that the NL was born. Subsequently, during its early struggles exclusively for the independence of Padania, the party made demands on Europe for the creation of a more federal Europe, a Europe of ethnic groups. The League also sees the European Union as a superstate that has neglected the sovereignty of nations. The League now has a bipolar view of the EU. The relationship between the EU and *La Liga* is, as Margarita Gomez-Reino describes, « The Europeanism of the Lega (*Popoli d'Europa per l'Europa dei Popoli*) is still to be found in the party's manifestos, even if it is the scepticism about Europe and its institutions that prevails.»¹³⁷ Indeed, the European Union has an undeniable role in the development and visibility of the party and its pro-independence action and in the fact that it has allowed smaller parties to obtain another type of electorate and another scene of political action. However, the party also remains very suspicious and still has a Eurosceptic side regarding the dynamics and policies of the European institutions.

At the European level, the NL has slowly but surely arrived on the political scene in the European Parliament. In the 1994 elections, the party won 6 seats and 4 seats in 1999. This was only the beginning for the party, but there was already a rise of the right wing, which outnumbered the left wing, led at that time by Silvio Berlusconi. It was at the end of the 1990s that it became clear that the European Parliament had a majority of right-wing parties and a majority of MEPs. However, a right-wing majority does not necessarily mean the extreme right, as the latter is less present during this period.¹³⁸ Then, the NL was registered in the Independence/Democracy (ID) group from 2004 to 2009 and then, after being expelled, joined the « Union for Europe of the Nations » before joining, again, in 2014, the ID, initially named « Movement for Europe of the Nations and Freedoms » (MENF). It is with these parties that MENF has been able to find itself in the coalition of the European Parliament since 2008 as well as during the years 2001 to 2006. In parallel to its breakthroughs at the European level, the League is making progress at the regional level. The party allies itself

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁸ SÄGESSER, Caroline, « Les résultats des élections européennes de juin 1999 », *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, vol. 1678, no. 13, 2000, pp. 1-47.

with a Sicilian party, The Movement for the Autonomy (*Movimento per le Autonomie*), thanks to its opposition to illegal immigration, which allows it to make inroads in municipal elections until 2012. The same year in which the federal secretary and founder, Umberto Bossi, resigned from his post following internal scandals. He will however be elected party president for life on a symbolic basis. Roberto Maroni therefore took over the provisional leadership of the party. His successor, Matteo Salvini, will be elected in December 2013 as the new Federal Secretary of the party. Or as Hervé Rayner said it, « It was thanks to a serious internal crisis that he took over the leadership of the party, thwarting the projections of a long leadership of Maroni »¹³⁹. It was therefore from the moment he took office that the « right-wing » movement of the party, which had been underway for some time, became more pronounced.¹⁴⁰ Its bureau and administration will then try to extend the party's roots throughout the country, which will lead to a change in the party's strategy and identity. This turn will lead to a change in the party's name. The party then planned to create a group with the National Front for the 2014 European elections. This group will not take place and with the loss of its four seats, the Northern League finds itself in the non-attached group. In June 2015, the Northern League, the National Front and other far-right movements created a political group called « Europe of Nations and Freedoms ». It is from this group that the current ID group will be created. This proximity with Marine Le Pen, the National Front's president at this point, but also with Putin's Russia president, will not allow a tabula rasa of past programmes. Indeed, a certain hatred towards immigration still remains. Moreover, Matteo Salvini, who will be Minister of the Interior and then Vice-President of the National Council in 2018 in a coalition government with the Five-Star Movement, remains a fervent defender of right-wing and even extreme right-wing ideas.

Matteo Salvini will then create another party in the North of Italy, the NcS (*Noi Con Salvini*) in order to cover the regions where the League did not obtain results. It was at this point that Salvini's close collaboration with the new neo-fascist party *CasaPound* was broken. Further internal party scandals erupted in 2017, including the conviction of its president, Umberto Bossi, among others.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

Following this period and several incidents, Matteo Salvini changed the name of the party in 2018 to simply « *Lega* », The League. The name changing of the party is also influenced by the decline of Berlusconi's popularity and the migrant crisis. This will allow him to be in the running in almost all the electoral districts for the March 2018 legislative elections. The Northern League then hopes to be able to overtake Silvio Berlusconi's party, « *Forza Italia* ». Indeed, the winner between the two parties would then have the possibility to take over the presidency of the Council. A coalition government between the League and the Five-Star Movement will emerge in the 2018 general election, even if the parties disagree on a number of issues, including the country's fiscal policy and some aspects of the foreign policy in matter. Indeed, with 17% of the votes, the NL becomes the third party at a national level, just behind the Five-Star Movement (32%) and the Democratic Party (18%) but especially, before *Forza Italia* (13%).¹⁴¹ It was then in 2019, during the European elections, that the party recorded a record breakthrough with 34% of the vote. The party will also achieve historic scores across the country in the 2019 regional elections. A few months later, the coalition between the League and the Five-Star Movement will come to an end and the party will find itself in the opposition of the Conte II government. The party is now in Mario Draghi's government (Mario Draghi is the former president of the European Central Bank) and this choice is seen as « a great return to the origins of the pro-European and federalist Northern League, that of the subcontractors of German industry »¹⁴² as stated Giulio Sapelli.

Hereby, we can illustrate the previous mentioned electoral results by using a table figuring the results of the NL for the European elections by year, expressed in percentage, ranking, number of seats, and its group in the Parliament also best interpreted with participation rated.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ RAYNER, Hervé, « La Ligue de Matteo Salvini et l'« environnementalisme de salon » : entre indifférence, hostilité et intérêt aux enjeux écologiques », *La Pensée écologique*, 2019, volume 2, n° 4, pp31 – 44.

¹⁴² SEGOND, Valérie, « le recentrage de la Ligue italienne pourrait isoler le RN en Europe », *Le Figaro*, 1st March of 2021.

¹⁴³ Europarl, « results of european elections », *European Parliament Website*, page consulted on the September 15 of 2021, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/fr/resultats-nationaux/france/1984-1989/session-constitutive/>

Year	Percentage of votes	Ranking	Number of seats	Parliament's group
1994	6,6%	5 th	6/87	ELDR (<i>parti Européen des Libéraux, Démocrates et Réformateurs</i>)
1999	4,5%	6 th	4/87	3 TDI (<i>groupe Technique des Députés Indépendants</i>), 1 NI
2004	5%	7 th	4/78	IND (<i>Indépendance/Démocratie</i>)
2009	10,2%	3 rd	9/72	EFD (<i>Europe Liberté Démocratie</i>)
2014	6,15%	4 th	5/73	NI
2019	34,26%	1 st	28/73	ID (<i>Identité et Démocratie</i>)

Several works and research on the history of the League attributes part of its success to the protest cycles of the Italian political system. And from this perspective, it remains difficult to find many studies and elements of analysis on the organisation and functioning of the party. Moreover, given that its trajectory has not been very linear so far and that it has undergone various structural and ideological changes throughout its existence, it is difficult to clearly define and categorise this party. It has clear features of the far-right movement, but also some characteristics that tend more towards populism, nationalism, et caetera.

It is important to go back to the fact that the party was born in a context that was favourable to it, particularly the political and economic context. The country is described in a binary way, as being split in two, with the industrialised, rich, and modern North on one side, and a poorer, mainly agricultural South on the other. The North feels that its economic development is held back by the South, but also by the State and its fiscal policy. The North then started to develop its independence argument based on identity issues. Gilberto Oneto said that « every tree of freedom has its roots in identity, culture and history, and finds in the economy the fertiliser that makes it grow stronger. Without a tree strongly rooted in cultural identity, the fertiliser of the economy is just a pile of

cow dung »¹⁴⁴. By using this phrase in her writing « *La Ligue du Nord et l'invention du Padan* », Marta Machiavelli wants to underline the fact that by declaring this, the party wants to show that « the autonomy of a « colonised » nation whose culture has been « denied » can be presented as a noble cause », in contrast to the vision of a region that wants to be independent because it is richer, develops better, and feels held back by the « poorer » South.¹⁴⁵ We then see the ideology of the party gradually unfold. In the 1990s, it evolved into a category of the « new European right » and more precisely as a populist party. Its discourse on immigration also began to gain a greater importance and space in the party programs and political debates.¹⁴⁶

Although, it should be remembered that the League is a party that researchers have always found difficult to classify politically. Machiavelli even employed the terms « a politically unclassifiable chameleon party »¹⁴⁷ to describe it. However, it will be mostly described as an extreme right-wing party in most of the literature and media.

If we are to attribute some characteristics to the League, the following terms emerge from various readings: Eurosceptic, sovereigntist, independentist, xenophobic, racist, populist tendency, its opposition to immigration etc. In an article in *Le Monde*, Claire Chazal highlighted some of the party's political program points, including its desire to leave the European Union. Indeed, various speeches on this subject have hinted at it and, even if this project is hardly implementable in the current context and Italian conjuncture, it have worried the political world. Let's remember that the NL started out being pro-Europe and is now in a completely opposite position.¹⁴⁸ As a little parenthesis, this gives a throwback sensation to the NF's contextualization as well where the same tendency was perceptible: a walk hand-in-hand with the European Union at the party's debuts, to tend towards defending an Eurosceptic vision at some point.

¹⁴⁴ ONETO, Gilberto, « Le radici dell'albero della libertà », *La Padania*, 1er mars 1998.

¹⁴⁵ MACHIAVELLI, Marta, « La Ligue du Nord et l'invention du « Padan » », *Critique internationale*, vol. n° 10, no. 1, 2001, pp. 129-142.

¹⁴⁶ GOMEZ-REINO CACHAFEIRO, Margarita, 2004, pp. 133-146.

¹⁴⁷ CHAZAL, Cyrielle, « Italie : La Ligue, une formation populiste passée de l'autonomie au souverainisme », *Le Monde*, 17 mai 2018, 1p.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

The Northern League also rejects the EU for its involvement and management of the migration crisis – another parallel with the NF's point of view on the question as previously developed. In fact, according to the party and a part of the Italian population, the EU has not fulfilled its role and has left the country to fight for itself in the face of a problem that does not only concern certain countries but the entire European Union. But for other researchers, this opposition to Europe comes from elsewhere. Marc Lazar, director of the Centre d'Histoire de Science Po Paris, identifies three phases in which Italians have « dropped out » of the EU. The first is due to the application of the Maastricht Treaty, which will put an end to the country's economic and social development model based on the increase in debt and deficit, the second is due to the economic crisis of 2007, and the third is due to the migratory crisis which began in 2013.¹⁴⁹ Once again, we reach out to the same dynamics as the NF as Euroscepticism rises from both external and internal factors – in the context of a structuralist dynamic, moreover – , that being : the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty at a European Level, social and economic crisis in an internal level, to finish with a worldwide issue at a supra-State level, the migratory crisis.

Other researchers, such as Clément Abélamine, have also examined the question of categorising the La Ligue party. He proposes to differentiate between two types of extreme right: the one that is particularly widespread in Eastern Europe with more fascist tendencies, nostalgic for the Nazi period, and the one that is more modern, more secure, anti-immigration but more moderate. According to the author, the Northern League would belong to this second category. Moreover, if we take as a tool the theory of the four fundamental cleavages of Lipset and Rokkan and in particular the center-periphery cleavage, already seen earlier in this work, it will allow us to confirm this extremist character of the party since it is from this cleavage that the party was born and that it developed its independentist side and its hatred against immigrants.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ GUYOT, Claire, « comment l'Italie est passée de pro-européenne à désenchantée », *Euractiv*, 12 mars 2018, 1p.

¹⁵⁰ LIPSET Seymour Martin, ROKKAN Stein, *Structures de clivages, systèmes de partis et alignement des électeurs : une introduction*, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2008, p75.

Piero Ignazi, Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Bologna, categorises the Northern League in an interesting way. He describes the league as « an extreme centre party » and its voters as « centre extremists »¹⁵¹. According to him, the party's attitudes stem from its autonomist origins and not from its more authoritarian way of thinking.¹⁵²

The League is therefore a party that is mostly described as far-right, having several characteristics that are indeed derived from those of far-right parties. However, some researchers tend to say that it has more of a populist aspect, defined in the dictionary as « an ideology and political movements advocating a path towards socialism; ideology of some nationalist movements ».

It is a rather small party, if we compare it to the National Front in particular, but it does not give up because it continues to maintain and increase its electorate, both at the national and European level.

V. CROSS-ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL LEVEL ELECTIONS RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL FRONT AND THE NORTHERN LEAGUE

Having gone through the History and internal functioning of the parties studied, as well as having demonstrated that these two parties can be categorised as far-right parties. In addition, having seen a brief overview of their progress and electoral course through their existence, we will now proceed to the analysis of the results obtained in the last six European elections, namely those of 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019. After a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the votes obtained in percentage and in seats, particularly in the national and European elections of the above-mentioned period, we will carry out a comparative analysis between the results of these two parties. To conclude this case analysis, we will put into practice the theory of second-order elections and,

¹⁵¹ IGNAZI Piero, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p.158.

¹⁵² VALENZA, Domenico, « La Ligue du Nord ou le populisme à l'italienne », *Nouvelle Europe*, 9 janvier 2012, 1p.

with the help of the criteria defining it, we will affirm or deny that these Italian and French elections are, or are not, second-order elections. In order to answer our research question, i.e. « can we confirm or deny that the European elections from 1994 to 2019 included within the parties of the Northern League in Italy and the National Front in France are considered as second-order elections », we will also briefly analyse the electoral results of the presidential and legislative elections. These will be useful in applying the criteria for second-order elections.

We will start our analysis by presenting various tables of the national and European electoral results of the last 27 years. Through the following analysis of the electoral results, we will observe the evolution of the popularity of the political parties « Lega » in Italy and the « Rassemblement National » in France. We will therefore proceed in a chronological order, going over the years mainly concerned by elections, analysing in parallel the scores of each party.

The study of the above-mentioned European elections also allows us to understand the functioning of European politics and the supranational institutions that are important actors in this framework. It will also allow us to highlight the differences between national and European issues, such as the one between national policies and election programmes. This study will also lead us to observe the contrast and also similarities that can exist between the electoral results of the national level and those of the European level. It is in relation to these questions and characteristics that the theory of second-order elections was developed and to shed light on why and how these elections, often intermediate, are perceived as being of lesser importance.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ BRACK, Nathalie, RITTELMAYER, Yann Sven, STANCULESCU, Cristina, « *Les élections européennes de 2009 : entre national et européen: Une analyse des campagnes électorales dans 22 États membres.* », *les cahiers du cevipol*, 2009, n°3, p4.

Graph of the national electoral results of Italy and France from 1992 to 2018
including the results of the presidential and legislative elections

	France (presidential)¹⁵⁴		France (legislative)¹⁵⁵
1995	Jacques Chirac: 52,64%	1993	Rassemblement Pour la République (RPR): 28,06%
	Lionel Jospin: 47,36%	1997	Socialist Party (SP): 28%
			NF: 5,74%
			SP: 38,05%
			RPR: 22,81%
			NF: 5,59%
2002	Jacques Chirac: 82,21%	2002	Presidential majority: 52,8%
	Jean-Marie Le Pen: 17,79%		Parliamentary left: 45,2%
			NF: 1,85%
2007	Nicolas Sarkozy: 53,06%	2007	Parliamentary right: 49,66%
	Ségolène Royal: 46,94%		Parliamentary Left: 49,08%
			NF: 0,8%
2012	François Hollande: 51,64%	2012	Presidential majority: 49,93%
	Nicolas Sarkozy: 48,36%		Parliamentary right: 44,12%
			NF: 3,66%
2017	Emmanuel Macron: 66,10%	2017	République En Marche (Presidential Party): 43,06%
	Marine Le Pen: 33,90%		NF: 8,75%

¹⁵⁴ Ministère de l'Intérieur Français, « Résultats de l'élection présidentielle 2017 », France, 23 avril et 7 mai 2017, [https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Presidentielles/elecresult__presidentielle-2017/\(path\)/presidentielle-2017/FE.html](https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Presidentielles/elecresult__presidentielle-2017/(path)/presidentielle-2017/FE.html), page consultée le 18 septembre 2021.

¹⁵⁵ Ministère de l'Intérieur Français, « Résultats des élections législatives 2017 », France, 11 et 18 juin 2017, [https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Legislatives/elecresult_legislatives-2017/\(path\)/legislatives-2017/index.html](https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Legislatives/elecresult_legislatives-2017/(path)/legislatives-2017/index.html), page consultée le 18 septembre 2021.

	Italy (presidential)¹⁵⁶		Italy (legislative)¹⁵⁷
1992	Oscar Luigi Scalfaro (Christian democracy) : 67,6% GianFranco Miglio (Northern League) : 7,48%	1992	Christian democracy: 29,66% Left democracy: 16,11% Northern League: 8,65%
		1994	Centre-right coalition: 42,84% Northern League (on the right coalition): 8,36% Left-wing coalition: 34,34%
1999	Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (independent) : 71,41%	1996	Left-wing coalition (l'Olivier): 42,16% Center-right coalition (Pôle pour les Libertés): 40,29% Northern League: 10,83%
		2001	Berlusconi's coalition : 45,40% L'Olivier : 42,99%
2006	Giorgio Napolitano (Left Democracy): 54,84% Umberto Bossi (NL): 4,24%	2006	Center-left coalition: 49,81% Right coalition: 49,74%
		2008	Berlusconi's coalition: 46,81% Veltroni's coalition: 37,54%
2013	Giorgio Napolitano (independent): 74,02% Stefano Rodotà (independent): 21,76%	2013	Left coalition: 29,54% Right coalition: 29,18%
2015	Sergio Mattarella (independent): 66,8% Ferdinando Imposimato (M5S): 12,7%	2018	Right coalition: 37% M5S: 32,68% Left coalition: 22,89%

These tables figure all the electoral results for the presidential and parliamentary elections in Italy and France between 1992 and 2018. These data and results give us a first overview of the electoral results exposed in the first part of the analysis that was more turned to a contextualisation of the party studied and their electoral trajectory. They will also be of a great help and precious foundation in the next development of our analysis. Indeed, they will

¹⁵⁶Governo Italiano, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, “ Governo Amato”, site of the Italian Government, <https://www.governo.it/it/i-governi-dal-1943-ad-oggi/xi-legislatura-23-aprile-1992-16-gennaio-1994/governo-amato/3169>, page consulted on the September 18th of 2021.

¹⁵⁷ JOANNIN, Pascale, « Élections législatives et sénatoriales en Italie, 13 et 14 avril 2008 », Fondation Robert Schuman – Centre de recherches et d'études sur l'Europe, 13 avril 2008, 1p. <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/fr/oee/0836-elections-legislatives-et-senatoriales-en-italie-13-et-14-avril-2008> page consultée le 18 septembre 2021.

allow us to situate, within the framework of the theory of second-order elections, the electoral cycles of each country and to see when national elections took place in relation to the European elections of each country.

We note in these results the presence of our studied parties. In fact, for Italy, we outline that candidate belonging to the League party having arrived two times in the second round of the presidential elections. With regards to the Italian electoral system, presidential elections can have up to 16 rounds, they are held every 7 years on the basis of indirect Universal suffrage and are conducted by a first-past-the-post system. The candidate must obtain a two-thirds majority of the electoral college to win the election. In 1992 and 2006, Gianfranco Miglio and Umberto Bossi didn't manage to obtain greater scores. Although, in legislative elections, the party has managed to win a majority of seats two times by being in right-wing coalitions, often led by Silvio Berlusconi. In 1992, the party obtained almost 10% of the votes and was, with only few exceptions, mostly part of the government majority.

On the French side, we can indeed note the double presence of the National Front, represented by the father and daughter Le Pen, in the presidential elections of 2002 and 2017 where they gained respectively 17,79% in 2002 for Jean-Marie and 33,90% in 2017 for Marine. In addition, the NF has often obtained small insistent scores in French legislative elections. Indeed, the party obtained 1,85% of votes in 2002, 0,8% in 2007 and 3,66% in 2012 inside the chamber. There is also often a fairly consistent presence of the right in the hemicycle as they had the majority in 2002 and in 2007.

We will now expose the turnout rates that will better exemplify the importance of the elections which results were previously analysed and quantified. These turnouts data will also be used later on when we will give a greater interest on establishing or not the theoretical criteria for second-order elections.

Electoral results of the last 6 European elections (from 1994 to 2019) in number of seats and percentage of « Lega » (The Norther League) (Italy) and « Rassemblement National » (France).¹⁵⁸

<i>Lega</i>	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Seats	6/87	4/87	4/78	9/72	5/73	28/73
Percentage	6,6%	4,5%	5%	10,2%	6,15%	34,26%
Turnout	74,8%	70,8%	73,1%	65,05%	60%	54,5%
<i>Rassemblement National</i>	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Seats	11/87	5/87	7/78	3/72	23/73	22/73
Percentage	10,52%	5,69%	9,81%	6,3%	24,86%	23,3%
Turnout	53,5%	47%	42,75%	40,6%	43,5%	50,1%

Just by reading the results, three higher than average scores are observed as the results of the Northern League in 2009 with 10,2% and in 2019 with 34,26% but also for the National Front with the European elections of 1994 with 10,52%, the 2014's one with 24,86% and the last one of May 2019 with 23,3%. Regarding the Northern League, the elections of 2009 and the one in 2019 where we have seen elections in which the party has achieved a good increase in scores. Indeed, in 2009, the Northern League gained more than five percent since the last elections of 2004, where it obtained 5% and 4 seats and therefore obtained five more seats in the Parliament. The party thus obtained 9 seats and 10,2%. In 2019, the party managed to triple its score from the 2009 elections and became the largest party in its group (ID) with 28 seats. Indeed, in 2009 as mentioned above, the party counted 9 seats for 10,2% against 28 seats and 34,26% ten years later in 2019. This is an achievement for the party, which until now had not exceeded

¹⁵⁸ Electoral results founded on the website of the European Union - « Europarl », website of the European Parliament, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/fr/powers-and-procedures/national-parliaments>, (page consulted on the august 10, 2021)

the 9 seats mark. However, for the elections of 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2014, we see a lower variation of scores, ranging from 4 to 6% without ever obtaining more than 6 seats. This further shows the surge in 2019. As a matter of fact, even if scores racket in a precise period of 10 years' time for the Italian party of extreme-right, there is a period that is clearly less of a triumph. These electoral results go hand-in-hand with the historical background previously detailed but the notoriety of the party comes back in 2019 with a clear surge that is further reproduced – also in numbers.

The RN party - formerly called the National Front - has had high scores in the last two elections of 2014 and 2019. Indeed, they scored respectively 24,86% and 23,3% for those two last elections. The party has managed, since 2014, to remain at the top of its political group (ID) by winning 23 and 22 seats in the 2014 and 2019 elections respectively. Its lowest scores were in 1999 and 2009, obtaining 5,69% in 1999 and 6,3% for the 2009's elections. Very far from the previous triumphs of 2014 and 2019. But the party has managed to hold on to a minimum of seven to eleven seats over the last 27 years, as in 1994 and 2004 it obtained not more than 10% of the vote. We can observe here a same dynamic followed by both parties. Indeed, they meet a higher popularity that is clearly translated by the electoral scores that are later moderated wins, to get back to a notable popularity. We can talk about a wave movement, unstable electoral results, but for parties that are not always reach an unanimity in the public opinion, the important factor to point out here is there they are always running the elections, independently of the results. Even if some periods are characterised by low electoral results, both the NF and the League find a way to relive their popularity and regain power in a mid-term period of time, without disappearing of their respective political frameworks and electoral chessboards – both at national and European levels.

The 1994 European elections came just after the entry into force of the Treaty on European Union, the Maastricht Treaty. As seen earlier in this paper, the Maastricht Treaty was in particular the trigger for a growing Eurosceptic attitude of the Northern League and of the National Front. This treaty is the one that founded the EU, based on three pillars: the European Communities, the

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and cooperation in the fields of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA).

In the case of France, there are 87 seats to be distributed by proportional representation within a constituency. As analysed in the previous table, the National Front won 11 seats with more than 10%. 1 seat more than the last two European elections in which the party participated but a lower score in terms of percentage. The list was chaired by Jean-Marie Le Pen and the party's slogan was « Against the Europe of Maastricht, go France! ». Pascal Perrineau¹⁵⁹ offers an interesting analysis of the June 1994 European elections in France. He maintains that they should be analysed and understood under Jean-Luc Parodi's model, which assumes four dimensions specific to this type of election: European, proportional, intermediate, and preparatory. The proportional type explains the multitude of lists present (more than 5 lists more than the previous European elections) and the splintering of the polls explains the rise of peripheral parties (in parallel to the Lipset and Rokkan cleavages). The intermediate character is linked to the fact that there are no national issues at stake at this time and therefore explains the high abstention rate and the over-representation in power of opposition parties. The European aspect is structured by the social and political logic of the voters. Lastly, it is preparatory since these elections make it possible to establish forecasts for the future of the State.

In the case of Italy, the scores are slightly different. The country, where voter participation is not compulsory but customary and registered in the criminal record if not enforced, also proceeds with the proportional representation voting system. The territory is divided into 5 constituencies: Northwest, Northeast, Central, South and Islands. In the North alone, 37 seats are up for election. The Northern League obtained 6 seats with 6.6% during the 1994's European elections. It was an eventful period for Italian politics at that time. Various structural changes were made in the country, the elections to the Chamber changed, a reorganisation of the parties took place and new coalitions were formed. On the right, the *Alleanza Nazionale* replaced the MSI. With Silvio Berlusconi and his party still in the lead, the Alliance's high scores mean that the

¹⁵⁹ PERRINEAU, Pascal, YSMAL, Colette, « Introduction », Pascal Perrineau éd., *Le vote des Douze. Les élections européennes de juin 1994*. Presses de Sciences Po, 1995, pp. 11-17.

Italian right has more than half the seats.¹⁶⁰ The center-right coalition won 42,84% of votes and the Northern League, and the mentioned coalition, gained 8,36%.

The concern about the great disparity of the voting systems in each member State for the European elections is already present. Indeed, the lack of clarity and the absence of a non-unified party system does not help to increase voter turnout, nor does it help the voter to see clearly and to find interest. As Bréchon, Cautrès and Denni show, using Eurobarometer data, there was no mobilisation on European issues in the months of the electoral campaign preceding the elections. During the June 1994 elections, there was a great plurality of parties as well as a great variety of ideologies and programmes and the European political scene was very eclectic.¹⁶¹

The 1999 European elections take place on 13 June, just one month after the establishment of the Treaty of Amsterdam, which aimed to reform the European institutions in order to welcome new members. It introduced a number of issues, including immigration control and legislation, and judicial cooperation, but most importantly, it added legislative powers to the European Parliament through the legislative co-decision procedure. The Treaty of Amsterdam therefore enforces what the Treaty of Maastricht established, namely the European Parliament's right of scrutiny over the composition of the Commission. A new procedure with a dual function has therefore been introduced with this new treaty: the Parliament acts and validates the appointment of the President of the Commission and then confirms the appointment of the College once it has been constituted. Its power of control is thus even more extensive, and the European citizen gains a greater representation and influence in the European decision-making process. Although, participation rates are at their lowest for these European elections. (i.e. tables above). These elections are characterised by the clear victory of the right-wing formations and seem to confirm the model of a second-order election. On the one hand, the abstention rate was quite low, the lowest score recorded since the first European Parliament elections in 1979.

¹⁶⁰ BLAISE, Pierre, LENTZEN, Évelyne. « Les élections européennes de juin 1994 », *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, vol. 1443-1444, no. 18-19, 1994, pp. 1-54.

¹⁶¹ BRECHON, Pierre, CAUTRES, Bruno, DENNI, Bernard, « Chapitre 6. L'évolution des attitudes à l'égard de l'Europe », Pascal Perrineau éd., *Le vote des Douze. Les élections européennes de juin 1994*. Presses de Sciences Po, 1995, pp. 153-180.

Moreover, in some countries, such as Belgium, this election is seen as a sanction vote. These elections are perceived as unprecedented.¹⁶²

In the case of France, the campaign themes were rather national in character. This period was marked by the NATO intervention in Kosovo, a debate that was at the heart of certain European campaigns and which partly led to a climate of tension within the French right. However, the far-right continued its decline with 5% less and 6 seats less than in the previous elections. This was accentuated by the internal split of the National Front.¹⁶³ Indeed, if in 1994 the party obtained 10,52% and 11 seats, it gained only 5,69% and 5 seats for the following European elections of 1999.

On the Italian side, various elements have also slightly disturbed the tranquility of these elections. To name but a few, following the war in Kosovo, a large number of migrants took refuge in Italy, and with the internal presidential elections, the parties were no longer as attentive. The country proposed 19 lists for the elections and managed to send some 4 representatives to European Parliament. Despite 4 seats for the League in the European Parliament, the Italian right, still led by Berlusconi, largely won, on the legislative's elections, over the left-wing democrats with more than 42% opposed to 34% for the left-wing coalition.¹⁶⁴

The 2004 elections also saw some changes in the European institutions. A few months after the arrival of 10 new member States in the EU, and especially one and a half years before the signature of the Lisbon Treaty, these elections were expected to be a test and the polls predicted a high voter turnout. This has not been verified empirically, as, once again, very low turnout values have been recorded, even in the new member States. In addition, the nationalist and right-wing wave continued to grow across Europe. That year, there was also a large majority of sanction votes which shifted the European debate to a debate on national issues. The European culture was having difficulty in taking over

¹⁶² ABRIAL, Stéphanie, PINA, Christine. « Les élections européennes de juin 1999 dans les quinze pays de l'Union : une consultation de « second-ordre » ? », *Revue Française de Science Politique*, vol. 49, no. 4/5, Sciences Po University Press, 1999, pp. 707–17.

¹⁶³ SÄGESSER, Caroline, « Les résultats des élections européennes de juin 1999 », *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, vol. 1678, no. 13, 2000, pp. 1-47.

¹⁶⁴ SÄGESSER, Caroline, pp. 1-47.

national policies. The barometer data¹⁶⁵ showed, particularly in France and Italy, that the aim of the votes for the European elections was to sanction the right-wing national government in place. The number of lists also increased, recording 36 for Italy and 41 for France. In that sense, adding several factors like the arrival of ten new members and the increase in the sanction vote, the right-wing progresses as majority in the Parliament. The three parliamentary groups hosting right-wing and far-right parties, the Union for Europe of the Nations, Independence and Democracy and the Non-attached Group, account for the vast majority of Eurosceptic parties. These formation of three groups is the largest group in the European Parliament, gaining 0.6% more than in the 1999 elections and accounting for a total of 12.5% of the seats.¹⁶⁶ Michael Minkenberg and Pascal Perrineau point out that in several of the old member States, the radical right was closely watched, particularly following Le Pen's run-off in the 2002 French presidential elections, but not only. The rising scores of the right-wing across Europe are not reassuring. In their work, they use the term extreme right-wing party as being nationalist, xenophobic, authoritarian, anti-democratic and extremist. The National Front and the Northern League parties are among the top three far-right parties in terms of scores for these elections. While the NF obtained almost 10%, (9,81% to be precise), the League was only granted 5% and 4 seats. However, it should be borne in mind that the coalition of Italian right-wing parties finally shared a little less than 10% in the hemicycle, so the League's low score is still to be pointed out taking this component into account. France is the only country, along with Belgium, in the Europe of 15, to see its far-right party almost pass the 10% mark. This analysis of the European elections shows us that, within the EU member States and particularly within those from Western Europe, the growing proletarian aspect of right-wing voters is increasing in this post-modern period, as well as the development and demand for policies where the focus is on migration and security.¹⁶⁷ The aspect of the

¹⁶⁵ SOFRES, Baromètre des élections européennes, terrain des 7 et 8 juin 2004.

¹⁶⁶ PERRAudeau, Éric. « Les élections européennes de 2004 », *Pouvoirs*, vol. 112, no. 1, 2005, pp. 167-179.

¹⁶⁷ MINKENBERG, Michael, PERRINEAU, Pascal, "The Radical Right in the European Elections 2004." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2007, pp. 29-55

electorate switching from rich to poor is now clearer than ever in the history of the parties.

The 2009 elections are the first not to be directly preceded by a new treaty or institutional change on the part of the European Union. It is true that the Lisbon Treaty was signed and ratified 2 years before, but it only came into force after the elections. So, there is not much that can strongly disrupt the election. For these elections, the figures show one of the highest scores ever recorded so far for the Northern League with 10.2% and 9 seats, while the opposite is true for the National Front. Indeed, we observe one of the lowest scores ever achieved by the party with 6.3% and only 3 seats. These elections can be qualified as being a particular case in our work because it is in them that we can see the logic of second-order elections. Indeed, if this logic requires as criteria a low turnout, a rise of « peripheral » parties, a sanction vote and the primacy of national issues, the 2009 elections is characterised by a low turnout and a slight primacy of national issues.

In France, we observe that the campaigns for these elections were rather weak. Pascal Perrineau speaks of a « dry campaign » to designate an election campaign that was not associated, that year, with any other national election. It could have allowed the militant parties to develop a stronger campaign, but it was not the case. Some parties even took advantage of this to run a pre-campaign for the 2012 presidential elections. Moreover, there was a very low turnout with only 40.6% but above all an abstention rate of almost 60%, the highest since the European Parliament elections existed. On the other hand, there was no rise of peripheral parties, quite the contrary, nor was there a sanction vote.¹⁶⁸

In Italy, we can observe a rise in the League's share, which gives it its highest score since its first participation in the European elections in 1994 - where the party obtained 6,6% as a reminder. However, the turnout was lower, at 65.05%, which is less than 8% lower than in previous European elections. For these European elections of 2009, all is not so easy within Italy. Indeed, several internal incidents since 2006 have caused internal instability. In the hemicycle,

¹⁶⁸ PERRINEAU, Pascal, « Les élections européennes de juin 2009 en France : des élections de second ordre ou de reclassement ? », *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2009, pp. 653-670.

the left-wing coalition had the majority of 49,81%, even if it was minimal as the right coalition gained 49,74%, and there were several crises that caused the departure of the Minister of Justice, which led to the end of the Prodi government and to new elections in 2007 and the return of Berlusconi to power. In addition to that, Berlusconi, having recently created a new party, sees it winning the 2009 European elections in Italy.¹⁶⁹

When talking about the low turnout in general at the European level, but particularly for these elections, it is essential to underline the paradox, exposed by various researchers such as Pascal Delwitt, François Foret, Paul Magnette and others, of the growing disinterest of civil society in European issues compared to the increasing powers attributed to the European institutions. Logically, these two elements should converge in the same way. The left-right divide is also being reinforced during these elections, particularly following the recent accession of many members, most of whom are from Eastern Europe. In addition, the economic crisis of 2007 did not reassure voters and the civil society.¹⁷⁰

The 2014 European elections are characterised by several changes. First of all, the change in the allocation of seats. We go from 72 to 73 for the League and the National Front. In terms of turnout, there was an increase on the French side from 40.6% in 2009 to 43.5% in 2014. For Italy, the opposite is true: there was a significant loss of 5.1%, giving a turnout rate of 60%. Finally, the Lisbon Treaty, which has been in force not so long after the last European elections, has brought several new points, including the legal personality of the EU and the addition of a clause concerning the official procedure for leaving the Union.

There has also been a rise in Eurosceptic parties, particularly in the UK and the far-right is expanding throughout EU States. There is indeed a clear progression on the French side with the NF reaching almost 25% of the votes and 23 seats whereas the League makes hardly 6% and thus takes only 5 seats in the hemicycle. Indeed, a study conducted by Pablo Medina Lockhart and

¹⁶⁹ COOSEMANS, Thierry, « Les résultats des élections européennes de juin 2009 dans les États membres », *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, vol. 2038, no. 33, 2009, pp. 5-53.

¹⁷⁰ DUPOIRIER, Élisabeth, « L'eupéanisation des élections européennes ? Ce que nous apprennent les élections de juin 2009 », *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2009, pp. 531-544.

Christian Vandermotten proposes the analysis of variance of the results of the European elections between 2009 and 2014 and shows that the centre-right and eurosceptic parties have gained in popularity and votes.¹⁷¹ Moreover, they point out the low turnout of 42% in the old Member States compared to 67% in the respective parliamentary elections preceding the 2014 European elections. It is therefore the left-wing which, on average, will be the most affected by the effects of the economic crisis, unlike the far-right, which will see its popularity and results increase.

At that time, in France, it is a left-wing government. Indeed, the 2012 presidential elections saw François Hollande, candidate of the Socialist Party, win the title of president with 51,06% against the right-wing former president Nicolas Sarkozy who only gained 48,36%.

These European elections are the main elections of the National Front, the party is leading in the national vote.

For Italy, the scenario is different. Since the 2009 elections, the right wing had the majority and was led by Berlusconi. However, as a result of the crisis, internal dissent took place and Berlusconi lost his majority. A general election was therefore held in 2013 where we witnessed the victory of Giorgio Napolitano, former president 7 years before. In the 2014 elections, the party lost a large part of its votes, particularly in the face of the arrival of the *Movimento 5 stelle*.¹⁷² So, the Northern League only obtained 5 seats with a little bit more than 6% on the European Parliament. In these European elections, it is therefore the left, and particularly Matteo Renzi's Democratic Party, that takes the majority of votes and leads with almost 41% of the polls. In parallel, the party of the former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, *Forza Italia*, recorded a significant loss of results with only 16.8%.¹⁷³ The fall of the latter has caused a significant collapse of the Italian right. In the face of this economic crisis and its consequences in most sectors of the country, there is an imminent need for change.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ VANDERMOTTEN, Christian, MEDINA LOCKHART, Pablo, « Les élections européennes de 2014 : une analyse comparative des résultats aux échelles nationale et régionale », *EchoGéo*, 2014, 1p.

¹⁷² COOSEMANS, Thierry, « Les résultats des élections européennes de mai 2014 dans les États membres », *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, vol. 2221-2222, no. 16-17, 2014, pp. 5-60.

¹⁷³ Le Monde avec AFP, « élections européennes, les résultats dans chaque pays », *Le Monde*, 25 mai 2014, 1p.

¹⁷⁴ OCCHETTA, Francesco, NICQ, Hervé, « Italie 2014. Les défis sociaux, la crise politique, les réformes urgentes », *Études*, décembre 2014, pp. 19-29.

These European elections of 2014 have therefore caused an upheaval both within the political families of the EU and within each member State. The right-wing is losing a large part of its electorate, the far-right and the parties with Eurosceptic tendencies are seeing an increase in their electorate in some countries, such as France, while in others, such as Italy, it is the opposite scenario. We will see later, especially when analysing the results of the 2019 European elections, whether these trends persist or not.

Finally, we will analyse the most recent European election, namely that of 2019. During these elections, we observe that the traditional parties were punished by the vote and lost a significant number of seats in the parliament. Nathalie Brack explains in her article that this loss reflects the views of the voters and that it is explained by a growing feeling of insecurity within the EU and of not being listened to and heard by the European institutions. Furthermore, that their interests are not sufficiently defended. According to this author, these various elements of contestation make it possible to understand the electoral results of these 2019 elections by specifying that these votes should not necessarily generalise the sanction vote as a cause.¹⁷⁵ The allocation of seats has not changed since the 2014 elections. However, changes will take place in the future, which may affect the number of seats obtained by each party, due to the UK's Brexit. The actual exit of the UK from the EU was expected just after these elections on the January 31st of 2020 and will reshuffle some of the cards. Indeed, if we take the two parties studied as an example, they will inherit 5 and 3 more seats respectively for France and Italy.

In France, we can observe that the National Front party, or the « *Rassemblement National* » if we use its new name, performed better than the governmental party « En Marche » of President Emmanuel Macron. Indeed, the Le Pen's party obtained 23,3% of the votes against 22,42% for the Macron's party who is in a coalition with three other parties. In this case, we could indeed assume a sanction vote. These electoral results can also give us food for thought

¹⁷⁵ BRACK, Nathalie, « ÉLECTIONS EUROPÉENNES 2019: Vers La Politisation Du Projet Européen ? », *Diplomatie*, no. 99, 2019, p14.

about the different links between the national and supranational levels of the political scene. These May 2019 elections are also marked by a majority of votes for small peripheral or radical parties. The far-right, Eurosceptic and ecologically oriented parties are the big winners. While the parties of the left and the far-left suffered a significant loss of seats, the radical right was the big winner of this election. Moreover, with the wave of migration and the central importance of this issue throughout Europe, it is not necessarily a surprise to see this political trend breakthrough in such a way. The Northern League and the National Front are therefore the big winners in the Chamber.¹⁷⁶ We could assume, during times of such important issues being brought to light, parties that do not have a clear position on them can often be left out. As a matter of fact, Kevin Cunningham predicted this victory for radical right-wing parties when he said « We predict that anti-European parties will perform strongly in the European Parliament election. »¹⁷⁷

For France, the results are as follows: 23,3% of votes in favour of the NF and therefore 22 seats won. The party is maintaining its position compared to the last European elections in 2014 where it got, as a reminder, 23 seats with 24,86% of votes. The migration issue having played a major role in these elections, we note that for this party, immigration is the source of all evils. Béatrice Giblin underlines that unemployment, delinquency, insecurity but also public deficits in particular are caused by immigrants. However, the party refines this aspect and now focuses on the Muslim threat and not the migratory crisis as such. The various attacks in Europe, but not only, in recent years have accentuated the party's hateful and racist discourse. The supporters of the extreme right want to « protect » the borders, which in their eyes are « sieves » and which are caused by the free movement within the Schengen area.¹⁷⁸ The party's great and unanticipated victory in the 2014 European elections had surprised and shaken France. In 2016, the presidential campaigns were launched, and the popularity of Macron's new party grew. Let's not forget that was right after, during the 2017 French presidential elections that Marine Le Pen reached the second round, the second time in the party's history. Moreover, in the legislative elections that

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.6

¹⁷⁸ GIBLIN, Béatrice, p. 3-17.

followed the presidential elections, the NF took a few more seats in the chamber but did not increase its number of votes. During the first years of Emmanuel Macron's mandate and just before the last European elections, several debates shook the country, including new fiscal and economic policies, a tightening of migration policies, but especially the breakthrough of the Yellow Vests movement. During these European elections, we observe a participation rate of 50.1%, an increase of more than 7% compared to the last elections. The slight drop of 1,5% in the party's results compared to the 2014 elections is not at all worrying since it is linked to the increase in participation.¹⁷⁹

For Italy and the Northern League, a record score was observed. Indeed, the party had never transcended and never won more seats on its own than in 2009 when it took 9 seats. This 2019 election marks a record for the party as it won a majority of the votes and came out on top of its group with 28 seats and over 34% of the vote. In the 2014 elections, we saw a landslide victory for the Democratic Party and the arrival of the Five-Star Movement. The centre-right coalition at the national level had seen a clear decline (passing from 46,8% for the Berlusconi's coalition to 37% for the right coalition) compared to the 2009 results as well as for the League which had lost more than 4% of the votes and therefore 4 seats less. In 2016 there was also a change of government following a referendum on the number of senators and their powers. Moreover, the 2018 legislative elections did not help to restore internal stability. There was a victory for the Five-Star Movement with 32,68% as well as for the right-wing coalition led by Berlusconi with 37%. Even though his coalition has decreased, he maintains his right coalition on the majority at the national level. The government is formed by Giuseppe Conte after a long negotiation and is composed of a majority coalition formed by the Five-Star Movement and the League. Italy is thus awarded, following the departure of the UK, 3 more seats than in 2014 and a turnout of 54.5% is detected. The League, led by Matteo Salvini, won 28% more votes than in the 2014 elections and thus took the lead at the Italian level, but above all became the largest party in the parliament of any country. This victory will also overturn the government coalition within the

¹⁷⁹ KELBEL, Camille, « Les résultats des élections européennes de mai 2019 dans les États membres », *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, vol. 2431-2432, no. 26-27, 2019, pp. 5-102.

State and will be well ahead of the Five-Star Movement, the opposite situation of the 2018 legislative elections. On the other side, the right-wing victory has as a consequence the Italian left losing all its representation in the European Parliament.¹⁸⁰

VI. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: EMPIRICAL VERIFICATION OF THE SECOND-ORDER NATURE OF THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

To conclude this dissertation, we will now proceed to the final analysis of our case studies and compare them with the criteria defining second-order elections. This comparison and analysis will allow us to answer our research question which, as a reminder, is the following: can we confirm or deny that the European elections from 1994 to 2019 included within the parties of the Northern League in Italy and the National Front in France are considered as second-order elections?

In order to answer to this question and to see whether or not we can consider the results of the European elections for the League and the National Front from 1994 to 2019 as second-order elections, we will first restate the different criteria constituting a second-order election and then see if these criteria are verified or not.

In this sense, we will use the comparative tables used in our case analysis, which show the electoral results (in percentage of votes) of each party for each European election and the results (also in percentage of votes) of the presidential and legislative elections of each country. We will also use the percentages of turnout that will be useful for one of the criteria.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem.*

As a reminder, the theoretical model of second-order elections is composed of four criteria proposed by Pascal Perrineau ¹⁸¹ :

1. Low voter turnout.
2. The electoral cycle in which the European elections take place.
3. The sanction vote.
4. The explosion of the political spectrum seen as the distribution of parties.

The first criterion on voter turnout will be analysed in the following way. We will, year by year, see if the criterion is applied by comparing the turnout rates of national legislative elections with the turnout rates of European elections. In order to verify that there is a tendency to be a second-order election, the turnout rate for European elections must be lower than the one register for national elections. Indeed, this rate of participation reflects the involvement of the voter and the degree of interest he/she finds in these elections compared to the interest he/she has in national elections. If the voter tends, as we have seen in the theoretical part of this work, to feel more concerned by national elections and issues than European ones, there will be a tendency to a lower rate of participation in European elections. Moreover, as we have seen previously, the investment of parties in the electoral campaigns of the European elections is much lower than during the electoral campaigns at a national level. Another aspect that we have seen through our case analysis that can be highlighted. This is the voting conditions in each country. Indeed, in France voting is not compulsory, in Italy neither, but the rate of participation and abstention differs. In Italy, the custom of voting explains a lower abstention rate than in France, for example. Moreover, this participation rate can also be explained by the criterion of the electoral cycle which we will develop right after this part.

¹⁸¹ PERRINEAU, Pascal, « Les élections européennes de juin 2009 en France : des élections de second ordre ou de reclassement ? », *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2009, pp. 653-670.

ITALY ¹⁸²	1992	1994	1996	1999	2001	2004	2006	2008	2009	2013	2014	2018	2019
Legislative elections	87%	86%	83%		81%		84%	81%		75%		72,9%	
European elections		74,8%		70,8%		73,1%			65,05%		60%		54,5%

FRANCE ¹⁸³	1993	1994	1997	1999	2002	2004	2007	2009	2012	2014	2017	2019
Legislative elections	69%		68%		60%		60		55		42,64%	
European elections		53,5%		47%		42,75%		40,6%		43,5%		50,1%

In the 1994 European elections, we observe a turnout of 74.8% in Italy and 53.5% in France. For the national elections of each, we observe the following participation rates: for the French legislative elections of 1993 we observe a participation rate of 69% and in Italy we observe a rate of 87% for the legislative elections of 1992. In Italy, for all the European elections, we can see that the participation rate is always much lower than for the legislative elections. For example, we see that for the 1994's elections, the legislative's elections' turnout is of 86% against 74,8% even if the elections occurred at the same time. The same phenomenon occurs in France, with the exception of the last European elections in 2019, which saw a much higher turnout of 50,1% than the 2017 legislative elections with 42,64%.

Therefore, not taking into account the last European and French legislative elections, we can still confirm that this first criterion for defining second-order elections can be applied in our case.

¹⁸² Perspective Monde, « élections législatives italiennes », *école de politique appliquée, faculté des lettres et sciences humaines*, Université de Sherbrooke, Canada. Page consultée le 20 septembre 2021. <https://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMElection?codePays=ITA&dateElection=ITA201834&codeInstitution=1>

¹⁸³ Perspective Monde, « élections législatives françaises », *école de politique appliquée, faculté des lettres et sciences humaines*, Université de Sherbrooke, Canada. Page consultée le 20 septembre 2021. <https://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMElection?codePays=FRA&dateElection=FRA1993321&codeInstitution=1>

The second criterion relates to the electoral cycle in which European elections are held and more precisely to their positioning in relation to national elections. Indeed, we have seen that the timing of the European elections can influence and change the outcome of the vote. We have seen in our analysis that several stages take place during this electoral cycle. At the earliest stage, when the European elections take place just after the national elections, there is a tendency to vote for the parties in power, those that have obtained the most votes in the national elections. Simon Hix referred to this as the « honeymoon » period. However, we notice a lower turnout in the European elections than in the national elections when the latter take place just before the European elections. Furthermore, the author argued that when the EU Parliamentary elections take place just before a national election, the turnout tends to increase, but above all we observe a greater investment in the campaigns. It is then possible for the society of voters to vote strategically in order to influence the future national election. Finally, Miller and Mackie have shown us that when these European elections take place in a period perfectly situated between two national elections, the results tend to be very uncertain and difficult to predict. We are therefore going to observe, year by year, when the European elections took place in relation to the national ones and see if there is a change between the majority parties or not and if there is a difference in the degree of popularity for these parties.

The first European election of 1994

The French national elections took place in 1993 and 1995 while the Italian elections took place in 1992. However, we note that in Italy the legislative elections will take place in the same year as the European elections. Our European elections in France are therefore perfectly situated between the presidential and legislative elections, which leaves the possibility for many scenarios to unfold. In this case, we can see that in the presidential elections that followed the European ones, the Right came out on top as Chirac won the presidency with 52,64% opposed to Lionel Jospin that only obtained 47,36%. Indeed, it is a small lead. In the 1993 legislative elections, the votes were almost

completely balanced between the right and the socialist party. With regards to the results of the NF, if on the legislative level the party counted a humble 5,74% of the votes, in the European elections, however, the party did a bit better, winning more than 10% of the votes.

The Italian national elections took place two years before the European ones, but new legislative elections were held the same year as the European ones. Although the League only obtained 6.6% of the European Parliament that year, it reached the last round of the 1992 presidential elections, obtained almost 9% of the votes in the 1992 legislative elections, but ended up in the right-wing parliamentary majority in the 1994 legislative elections with 42,84% for the coalition and 8,36% for the League (which is inside the coalition). It is therefore the left that will obtain a majority in power in Italy in 1996.

Concerning these first European elections, we notice that the second-order theory is applied since, as predicted, the French European elections were perfectly in the middle of the two national ones and showed an almost perfect balance. The Italian European elections took place shortly after the national ones, or in the same year, and countered this "honeymoon" trend, since the majority in power was left-wing, but the right obtained more votes in the 1994 legislative elections.

The second European election in 1999

The French national elections took place in 1997 (legislative elections) and 2002 (presidential elections), we find ourselves once again in the position of the perfect in-between as for the European elections of 1994. These showed a landslide victory for Chirac over Jean-Marie Le Pen during the presidential elections of 2002 and Chirac won for the second time with 82,21% faced to Le Pen who only counting 17,79% of the votes. A score that held up to the 1997 legislative elections for the NF with 5.59% and a victory for the socialist left with 38,05% compared to the almost 23% of the right-wing Rassemblement Pour la République (RPR) party. This is the first time that the NF has reached the second round of the presidential elections, a record for the party. We are still between two national elections and so this provides for an unpredictable ballot,

as evidenced by the NF's arrival in the second round. A right-wing majority in the presidency but a left-wing majority in the chamber.

In Italy, national elections were held in 1999 for the presidency, with a non-party candidate, Carlo Ciampi, winning in the first round of voting with 71,41% of votes. In the 1996 parliamentary elections, there was a surge in votes for the League with over 10% and roughly equivalent scores of around 42% for the left and 40% for the right coalitions. For the European elections, the NL won 4.5% of the votes and thus did less well than the previous European elections where the party obtained 6,6%. These European elections therefore take place at the same time as the presidential elections and shortly after the legislative elections and reflect a majority for the centre in the presidential elections and an almost equal split between the left and the right in the chamber. The results are therefore fragmented and do not reflect the application of the second-order criterion since there is neither a 'honeymoon' period nor a continuity of the national trend.

The third European election in 2004

The French presidential elections of 2007 saw Nicolas Sarkozy's right-wing win with 53%, narrowly, over Ségolène Royal's left-wing that only got almost 47%. As well as the chamber in 2002, where the right-wing had a small majority with 52,8% over the left that obtained 45,2%. The NF won just under 2% for these legislatures' elections. The European elections show almost 10% of votes and 7 seats for the NF, which confirms the trend of the right winning at the national level, even if at this same level the NF is largely losing. The in-between theory is therefore applicable and allows this second-order criterion to be granted. The Italian national elections showed the following results: victory of the left in the 2006 presidential elections with Giorgio Napolitano and a very slight score for the League with only 4,24% for Umberto Bossi, the presidential candidate for the NL. We also witness a very small majority presence of the right in the 2001 and 2006 legislative elections with respectively 45,40% in 2001 and 49,74% in 2006. However, there is still an almost perfect balance between the left and the right in the chamber at these moments. In the European elections,

The League obtained 5%, i.e., 0.5% more than in the last European elections. There has thus been a slight decrease in interest in the right since the 1999 European elections. As these elections are situated between two national elections, we can say that the second-order criterion is respected and that there is a split between the left and the right.

The fourth European election of 2009

On the French side, we can observe the NF obtaining one of its lowest scores with only 6% and thus, 3 seats. In the national elections of 2007 and 2012, it is even worse since the party does not even obtain 1% in 2007 inside the chamber and it is the left that wins the presidential elections in 2012 with François Hollande that obtained 51,64% face to Nicolas Sarkozy, the former president of the Republic. Can this be explained as a sanction vote against the right? Since the European elections precede the presidential elections, the criterion could be granted.

For Italy, we see the League getting one of its best scores with over than 10% in the European elections. These are perfectly situated between the 2013 presidential elections which saw the left-wing candidate Napolitano retain his title of president and the 2008 legislative elections which saw the right-wing coalition led by Berlusconi take the majority with 46,81% of votes against the left coalition that only got 37,54%. We are therefore in a perfect opposition between the right and the left within Italy and given that the European elections take place just after the legislative elections where the right won, we can confirm the 'honeymoon' aspect of the second-order election criterion.

The fifth European election of 2014

In France, we observe that the NF obtained a record score with almost 25% of the votes and a position of first party in the European elections. The national elections taken into account here are those of 2012 where we have seen the winning of François Hollande in the presidential election and the wining of the left majority with 49,93% in the Chamber. The right coalition only obtained 44% and the NF got 3,66%, 2,86% more than the 2007's legislatives elections. If, as seen before, we saw a slight victory of the left in the presidential elections (with

51,6% oppose to 48% for the right candidate), we observe a very low score of the party in the legislative elections and a majority of the left in the chamber. Even if the latter is very weak, the trend is left-wing in France just before these European elections. What will also explain the record score of the NF at the European elections, beyond its place in the electoral cycle, is the consideration of migration issues that strongly animate the debate at this period. The NF's victory in the European elections can therefore be considered as a second-order election.

In Italy, the League scored very little compared to the previous European elections, with only 6%, compared to more than 10% in the European elections of 2009. In the national elections, we see that the presidential elections will come right after these European ones, in 2015 and that the center-left will win with their candidate Sergio Mattarella which obtained 66,8% of the polls. For the 2013 legislative elections, we see once again an almost perfect balance between the left and the right with respectively 29,54% for the left and 29,18% for the right. We can therefore say that, given the national elections with left-wing results that took place just before the European elections, we are in the "honeymoon period" and the left-wing trend continues.

Finally, the sixth European election of 2019

In France, this one took place two years after Macron and his party won the legislative with 43% and presidential elections with 66,10%. During these presidential elections, Macron was opposed to Marine Le Pen, first time for her in the second round of French presidential elections, and she obtained 33,90%. However, the NF continues to score well across the board as it remains at the top of the European standings, reaches the second round of the presidential elections for the second time since its creation and still achieves its best score in the legislative elections since 1993. Once again, being perfectly situated between two national elections, the 2019 European elections can be described as second-order as they follow the logic outlined by Hix.

In Italy, there was a record and overwhelming victory for the League at the European level as it finished first in its group and won over 34%. In the national elections of 2015 and 2018, we see the left take the presidency with

Mattarella and the right take the majority in the hemicycle with 37% in 2018. The honeymoon theory is therefore applicable as the right continues its momentum at European level just after the 2018 parliamentary elections.

Criteria 3 and 4 can be analysed together, as sanction votes and fragmentation of the political landscape are often linked. Indeed, when there is a sanction vote, identified in this work through, again, the electoral cycle, the party in power tends to lose votes and the radical anti-EU parties tend to gain votes. This sanction vote can be seen when the national elections take place just after the European elections so that the voter can express his dissatisfaction with the present outgoing government or express his wishes for the future government. We will therefore compare the timing of the elections between the European elections and the parliamentary elections only.

The 1994 European elections

In France, the legislative elections that followed the 1994 European elections took place in 1997. We can see that the right-wing party has indeed lost some votes from 28% to 22%, the right-wing party *Rassemblement Pour la République* came after the left-wing socialist party and the NF has also lost some votes. At the European elections, the NF obtained a somehow good score of 10.52%. The criterion therefore applies since the ruling party, the RPR, lost votes and the NF party gained votes in the European elections.

In Italy, the 1994 legislative elections, the same year as the European elections, showed a significant rise for the right with 42,8% and a significant fall for the left passing from 45,77% to 34,34%. In the 1996 elections, the League increased its score from the 1994 legislatures and passed from 8,36% to 10,83%. The gap between left and right was balanced. In the 1999 European elections, The League obtained 6.6%, a good score for a first participation. The criterion does not apply since the party in power does not lose votes and the extremist parties does not perform well either.

The 1999 European elections

In France, the legislative elections held in 2002 do not directly follow the European elections and, moreover, show a semblance of stability in the political spectrum. The left maintained its scores with more or less 40% and the right increased its electorate enormously to finally obtain 52,8% compared to the previous 22%. The NF, on the other hand, lost almost 4% and went from 5,59% to 1,85%. In the European elections, the National Front obtained 5.69%, i.e. almost 5% less than in the previous elections. The second-order criterion therefore does not apply. In Italy, the League obtained 4.5%, i.e. 2.2% less than in the previous elections, and at the level of the Italian Chamber, the 2001 elections showed a continuity of the left-right balance of the 1996 government. The criterion therefore does not apply either.

The 2004 European elections

In Italy, we observe that the results of the 2006 legislative elections once again show an almost perfect balance between the left with 49,81% and right-wing coalitions with 49,74%, whereas the European elections show that the League enjoyed a very slight increase of 0.5%. We have also seen that this year's European elections were mainly aimed at sanctioning the previous government and indeed the League lost a large part of its electorate since it was at almost 10%. The criterion is therefore applied.

In France, the NF obtained a score of more than 9% for the European election, which allowed it to recover from the 1999 elections where the party got 5,69%. At the legislative level, this party lost votes between the 2002 and 2007 elections (passing from 1,85% to 0,8%) and the right-wing majority in power also saw its score decrease with a loss of 3% while an increase is observed on the left-wing. The criterion is therefore verified.

The 2009 European elections

In France, these elections are followed by the 2012's legislative elections from further away, as each time since the European elections are very often intermediate, the parliamentary right loses some votes but the NF regains some strength with 3.66% of the votes. In the European elections, the party lost again and lost more than 3% compared to 2004 where he had 9,81%. In view of these

results, the criterion cannot be applied. In Italy, the opposite is true. The League performed well and obtained its highest score since its first European elections, with a record 10.2% of the vote. In the legislative elections that took place in 2013, there was a great loss of votes for the right-wing majority with 29% that was present in 2008 with the 46,8% of the Berlusconi's coalition. The latter is therefore heavily sanctioned, and the League rewarded at European level, so the criterion is fully applicable.

The 2014 European elections

In France, these elections show the meteoric rise of the National Front and the achievement of its highest scores ever. With almost 25%, the party is in first place. In the 2017 legislative elections, we will see the victory of Emmanuel Macron's party with 43% but the presence of the NF in the second presidential round represented by Marine Le Pen and a score of the party in the chamber with 8,75%. 2014 is the jackpot year for Le Pen and her party. We will also see the rise of the presidential party to power and therefore the significant loss of votes for the left of former president Hollande. This election is therefore of second-order for this criterion analysed.

In Italy, the opposite is true for the League, which only received 5% of the vote, a significant loss compared to its score 5 years earlier. At the level of national elections, there was a large decrease in votes for the right between 2008 and 2013, passing from 46,8% to 29,18% but an increase between 2013 and 2018 with 37%. The party in power before these European elections is therefore being punished in 2018. We will see for the 2019 European elections if this trend is confirmed. In this case the criterion is applicable but a bit confusing.

The 2019 European elections

Finally, in Italy, the League made a historic breakthrough in the European elections and took first place with more than 34% of the votes. A historic record in the life of the party. In the legislative elections, we saw that in 2013 the left and the right shared the power, in 2018 it is quite different since the right obtains the majority of the seats in the chamber with a right-wing coalition taking 37% and the Five-Star Movement that obtain 32,68%. Not studying the period following the 2019 European elections and due to the fact that the next

parliamentary elections will normally take place in 2023, we cannot fully confirm the trend of sanctioned voting in this case, however, in view of the previous elections, the rule of the criterion is applicable. As far as France is concerned, the number of seats and the number of votes for the European elections are almost perfectly maintained. As far as the legislative elections are concerned, we observe that compared to 2012 the NF gained votes as well as the right in general. However, we cannot know what the next election will be like since it will take place in 2022. Taking into account the link between the European elections of 2019 and the legislative elections of 2017, we observe that the criterion applies.

Table establishing whether or not criteria 1, 2, 3 and 4 constituting a second-order election are applied per party.

	Criteria n°1	Criteria n°2	Criteria n°3 and N°4
The Northern League			
1994	YES	NO	NO
1999	YES	NO	NO
2004	YES	YES	YES
2009	YES	YES	YES
2014	YES	YES	YES
2019	YES	YES	YES
The National Front			
1994	YES	YES	YES
1999	YES	YES	NO
2004	YES	YES	YES
2009	YES	YES	NO
2014	YES	YES	YES
2019	NO	YES	YES

After having proceeded to a complete analysis of the electoral results of the parties studied, namely the French National Front and the Italian Northern League, after having concluded or not, criterion by criterion and election by election, that the characteristics defining second-order elections can be applied to our case studies, we can proceed to answer our research question.

Can we confirm or deny that the European elections from 1994 to 2019 included within the parties of the Northern League in Italy and the National Front in France are considered as second-order elections?

Following the summary tables above that verify or not the four criteria for each election at the national and supranational levels in both study cases, The NL in Italy and The NF in France, we can aspire towards a clear conclusion. Indeed, for most of the elections studied, we can confirm that these European elections in Italy and France are indeed second-order elections. However, there are some nuances that are worth mentioning. These analyses are strictly based on quantitative data, taking the percentages results of elections and number of seats in each government. Based on the structural approach however, the influence of internal dynamics and developments is also important to be pointed out. Internal reorganization of the electoral system and political framework also have an impact on the results, that need to be considered with these qualitative factors as well. Also, with regards to the Italian elections of 1994 and 1999, we draw an exception as they cannot be qualified as second-order elections as proved above. Finally, regarding the 2019 elections, it is important to mention we have a different timeslot being used. Indeed, we have a clear beginning period but, being very recent, we are unable to take a delimited period, the end of the period not having already taken the end – with elections to be held still on 2022 and 2023. For this final period, our conclusion is based on a part of the period that could change its conclusion with future results and developments that are still unknown and uncertain.

VII. CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, we reviewed a small part of the scientific and non-scientific literature on the rise of far-right parties at the European level and tried to understand, through the theoretical model of second-order elections, how they have made such a breakthrough in recent years in European Parliament elections. We have tried to define concepts such as « political party », « extreme right », « European Parliament and the election system », « structuralism » and « second-order election », and approaches from the world of Social and Political Sciences that have enabled us to better understand them in our state of the art. After situating these concepts in the World in which they were born and in the World in which they are evolving, and after setting out the different visions, theories, hypotheses, approaches and analyses dedicated to them, we have used them to move on to practice. Finally, we conducted an empirical analysis of the results of the last six European elections of the Northern League and National Front parties. We analysed the gains and losses of votes in the European elections, which could reflect different causes, and we also compared them to the national election results. We also analysed voter turnout and compared it to the national elections in each country.

Finally, we used these data to see if the defining features of the second-order election model were applied to our results. We have answered the research question. So, what can we conclude?

In our first part, which proposes the theoretical framework of the concepts and terms used, we observed that structuralism is a political science paradigm that takes into account not the institutions, but the entities that make up the whole structure. It is therefore the study of the social process which, born of fundamental and often unconscious structures, will constitute the institution. Its aim is therefore to bring to light these intangible, unconscious structures in order to explain phenomena, in this case politics in our case study. Structuralism is therefore the phenomenon that will articulate units present in a given space, present in a structure, and whose action of placing these units is based on a system composed of three axioms: relation, position and permutation. This axiom of relation establishes the anteriority of the whole over its components.

This axiom of relation establishes the anteriority of the whole over its components and has been applied in our work in the sense that the ad hoc elections precede the second-order elections. But this structuralism was not analysed by chance, since beyond the sociological, psychological, and linguistic dimensions, to name but a few, which were proposed by scientists such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Ferdinand De Saussure or Durkheim, it also falls within the field of Political Science. This paradigm has been used in a large number of studies of political movements such as the rise of a tendency and electoral behaviour as in this work. Moreover, we realise that structuralism is not only a study of abstract and unconscious behaviour, but also takes into account units and systems that are directly observable, such as electoral results through the prism of second-order elections in our case. It has therefore allowed us to highlight certain components of our analysis such as the influence of the ballot on the turnout rate or the theory of the electoral cycle and the fact that it influences the results of European elections compared to national elections.

In order to analyse our two extreme right-wing political parties, the National Front and the Northern League, it was also necessary to define what a political party is and what the extreme right is. As we already know, the function of a political party is to provide governmental representation of citizens and their interests, interests expressed through voting, and to make political decisions in order to control and govern future society. However, we have also seen that it is complicated to define in one way what a political party is because of its many components. With regard to the extreme right, beyond its classic definition which assumes three types of movements, we note that it is not easy to define this term in a succinct and concise manner either. We therefore proceeded to list the defining characteristics that have been proposed and studied by the scientific community. Ranging from authoritarianism to anti-parliamentarianism to social inequality, the criteria that best define our case studies are related to racial and anti-immigration issues, a nationalist or populist tendency or a fascist heritage. In addition, a large number of labels are attached to it. Thus, the concept of the far-right can be seen as an umbrella for various categories such as nationalism and populism, to name but a few.

In order to answer our research question and thus to see whether or not the European elections in which the NL and the NF participated are second-order elections, we had to define this model of election before we could proceed to the analysis of the electoral figures and to confront this theory with practice. The second-order election model has been defined, through the analysis and research produced for this work, as follows: it is a model of electoral analysis that is based on several specific constituent criteria which are the turnout rate, an often-inverse result between the national election and the subsequent European election, the timing of the European elections and, finally, the motivation for voting. Studying and using this concept in our analysis is the focus of this work. Indeed, European elections have almost always been studied under the prism of this theoretical model and this time we decided to apply this theoretical model to an even more specific case than just European elections in general. It allowed us to compare the figures and units analysed, namely the electoral results of each party in the European elections and the electoral results of the presidential and parliamentary elections of each country between 1994 and 2019, with the criteria defining this model and to see if they applied. We therefore carried out an empirical analysis of the electoral results of the parties and political families related or not to our case study at national level, taking into account the legislative and presidential elections. It emerged that, in Italy, there is an almost continuous alternation between the right and the left in power and the more or less linear maintenance of the popularity of the Northern League with an average of 8%, as seen through its electoral results. With regards to our other case analysis, in France, there is also a more or less continuous alternation between the left and the right in legislative power as well as at the presidential level, but that the popularity of the National Front party, as expressed through the votes, has varied greatly. It went from 5% between 1993 and 2001 to less than 2% until 2012 and only recovered scores of more than 5%, namely 9%, in 2017 at the European level.

We then dig deeper into the trends emerging from the analysis of the electoral results at the European level of our case study. We observe that, while

the Northern League has maintained results between 4.5 and 6.6% since 1994, it has nevertheless made two breakthroughs of 10% and 34% respectively between 2009 and 2019. The National Front has maintained scores of 10% on average, with two counter-performances in 1999 and 2009 offering more or less 5%, but with two great feats in 2014 and 2019 obtaining more than 23% each. The presence of both parties candidates in the second round of presidential election are not to be forgotten, taking place in Italy, two times, in 1992 and 2006 and in France in 2002 and 2017. However, we observe a decreasing trend in the polls for the next French presidential elections that can be explained in particular by the results of the last regional elections in the country, but also by the change in the terms of the party's discourse, which have the primary aim of broadening its electorate but which are causing the opposite to happen, and by the place that the party occupies in the media sphere. With the rise in popularity of her far-right rival Eric Zemmour, Marine Le Pen and her party are losing an important place that they have often occupied until now.

Once we pointed out the above-mentioned trends in the political lifetime of both parties, we give a greater interest to the second-order election dimension of these elections. The four criteria that are used to qualify elections as such are further verified empirically. We begin by using the first, by applying the low voter turnout criterion on the one hand and the timing of the European elections compared to the national elections on the other hand to check the electoral cycle criterion. Finally, we analysed the last two criteria together, namely the sanction vote and the splintering of the political spectrum and families, by analysing the timing of the national elections in relation to the European elections. If the latter take place just before national elections, then the European vote is often used by voters to send a message to the outgoing or future government.

After this analysis, which we hope is as complete as possible, can we then say that the European elections that took place between 1994 and 2019 for the Northern League parties in Italy and for the National Front in France are second-rate elections? Even if some exceptions were worth mentioning when concluding our different analysis, taking into account the importance of qualitative and quantitative data used, we can still very much answer our initial question with a yes. Our hypothesis is verified, the elections deeply analysed, we can clearly state the European elections that took place between 1994 and

2019 can be qualified as being second-order ones through the lenses of the Northern League and National Front results. By qualifying these elections as such, this also gives us a wider view on the far-right movements successes in Europe, most precisely in France and Italy. If the trends enounced in this works still verify on the long term, we can expect reliving some triumphs of such parties translated in the rise to second round of presidential elections for example or a clear supremacy in the European political chessboard in the upcoming years.

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IX. APPENDIX

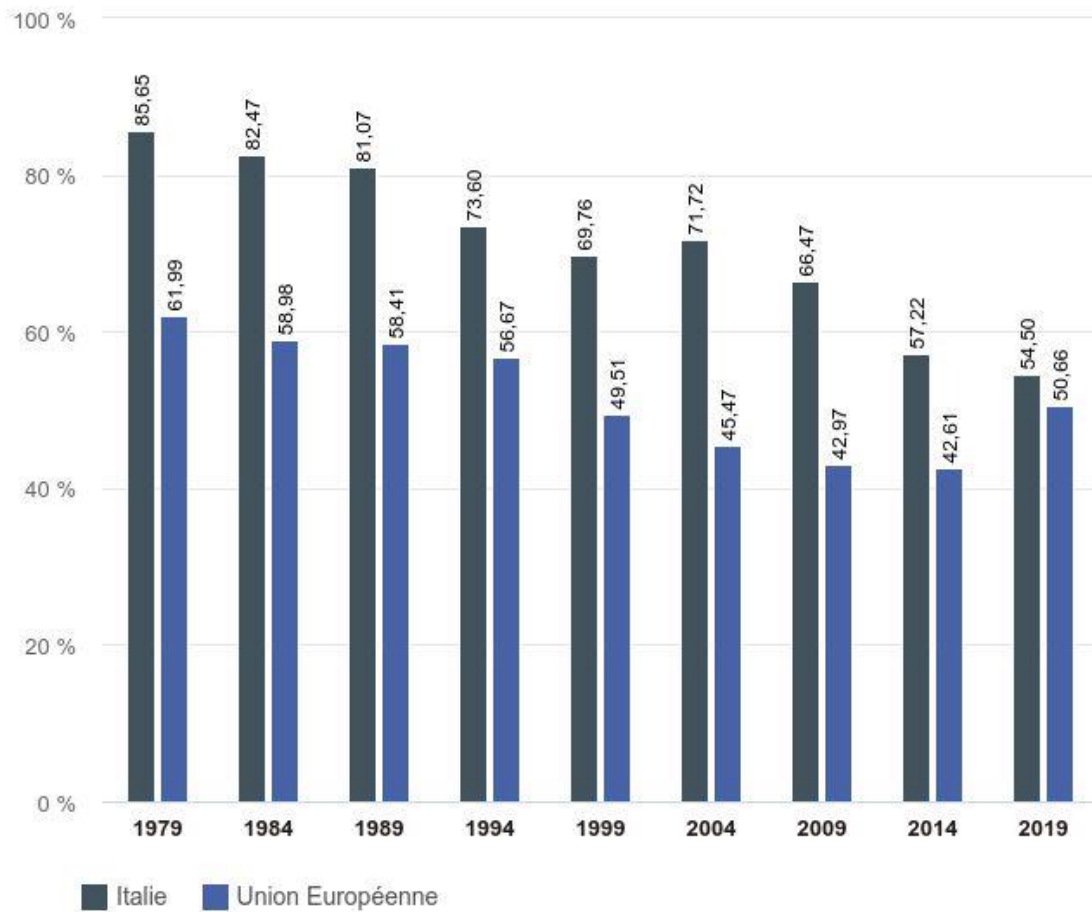
- Turnout of the European Election between 1979 and 2019 by countries.

: TABLEAU 2. TAUX DE PARTICIPATION LORS DES ÉLECTIONS EUROPÉENNES (EN %, 1979-2014)

	1979	1981	1984	1986	1989	1994	1995	1996	1999	2004	2007	2009	2013	2014	Évolution 2009-2014 *
Allemagne	65,7		56,8		62,3	60,0			45,2	43,0		43,3		47,9	+ 4,6
Autriche								67,7	49,4	42,4		46,0		45,7	- 0,3
Belgique	91,4		92,1		90,7	90,7			91,1	90,8		90,4		90,4	=
Bulgarie											29,2	39,0		35,5	- 3,5
Chypre										72,5		59,4		44,0	- 15,4
Croatie													20,8	25,2	+ 4,4
Danemark	47,8		52,4		46,2	52,9			50,5	47,9		59,5		56,4	- 3,1
Espagne				68,5	54,7	59,1			63,1	45,1		44,9		45,9	+ 1,0
Estonie										26,8		43,9		36,4	- 7,5
Finlande								57,6	30,1	39,4		40,3		40,9	+ 0,6
France	60,7		56,7		48,8	52,7			46,8	42,8		40,6		43,5	+ 2,9
Grèce		81,5	80,6		80,0	73,2			70,3	63,2		52,6		58,2	+ 5,6
Hongrie										38,5		36,3		28,9	- 7,4
Irlande	63,6		47,6		68,3	44,0			50,2	58,6		58,6		51,6	- 7,0
Italie	85,7		82,5		81,1	73,6			69,8	71,7		65,1		60,0	- 5,1

Participation par année

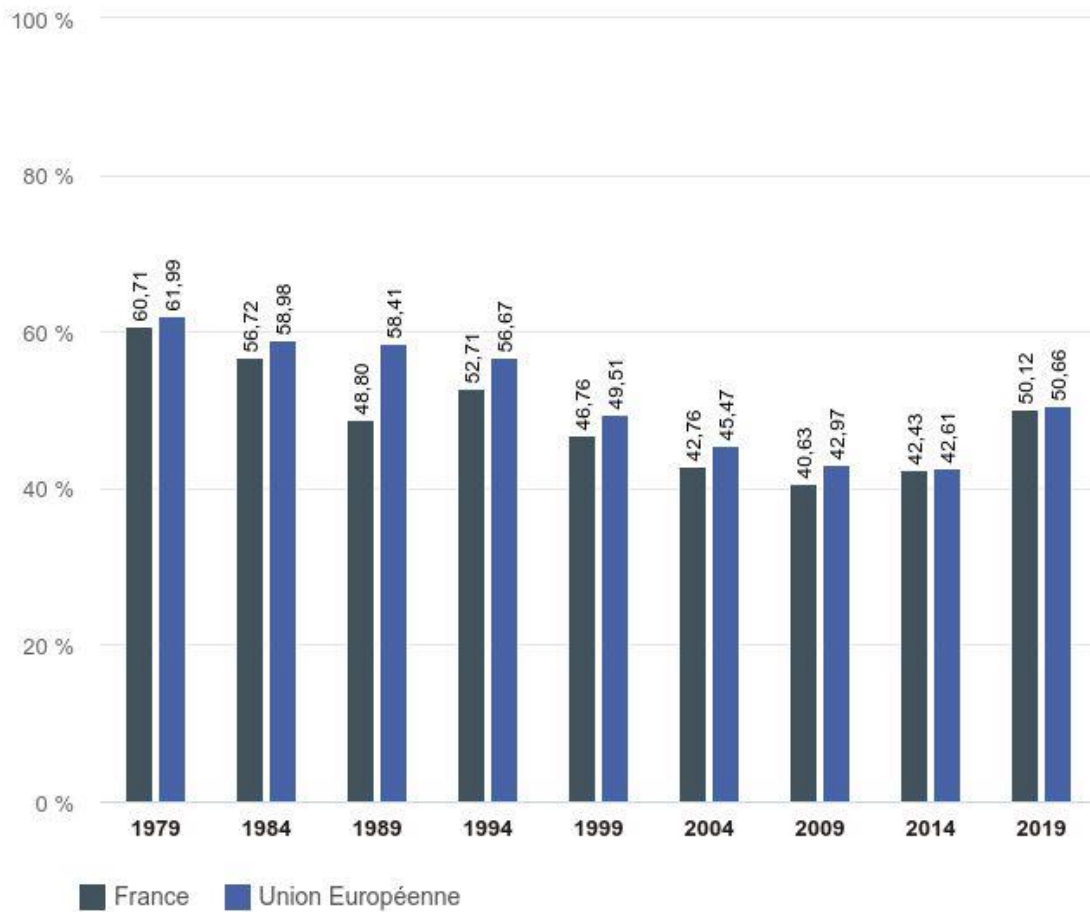
Italie - Résultats définitifs



Source : Parlement européen en collaboration avec Kantar

Participation par année

France - Résultats définitifs



Source : Parlement européen en collaboration avec Kantar

- Electoral results by year and by parties for the European Election in Italy since 1994 to 2019.

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 1994-1999

Session constitutive

Pays	PSE	PPE	ELDR	GUE	FE	RDE	V	ARE	EDN	NI	Total de sièges
IT	18 ●	12 ●	7 ●	5 ●	27 ●	0 ●	4 ●	2 ●	0 ●	12 ●	87
	PDS 15 PSI 2 Ind. Sin. 1	PPI 8 Patto Segni 3 SVP 1	LN 6 PRI 1	RC 5	FI 25 CCD 2		Fed. Verdi 3 RETE 1	Pannella - Rifformat ori 2		AN 10 MSI 1 PSDI 1	

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 1999-2004

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE-DE	PSE	ELDR	Verts/AL E	GUE/NG L	UEN	TDI	EDD	NI	Total de sièges
IT	34 ●	17 ●	7 ●	2 ●	6 ●	9 ●	11 ●	0 ●	1 ●	87
	FI 22 PPI 4 CCD 2 CDU 2 UDEUR 1 RI/Dini 1 SVP 1 Pension 1	DS 15 SDI 2	Democrat i 6 PRI/LIB 1	Fed. Verdi 2	RC 4 CI 2	AN/Segni 9	Bonino 7 LN 3 MSI 1		LN 1	

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 2004-2009

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE-DE	PSE	ALDE	Verts/AL E	GUE/NGL	IND/DEM	UEN	NI	Total de sièges
IT	24 ●	16 ●	12 ●	2 ●	7 ●	4 ●	9 ●	4 ●	78
	FI 16 UDC 5 AP- UDEUR 1 P.Pensionati SVP 1	DS (U.Ulivo) 12 SDI (U.Ulivo) 2 Ind (U.Ulivo) 2 MRE (U.Ulivo) 1	DL Margh (U.Ulivo) 7 S.C.D.P(Id V) 2 L. Bonino 2 MRE (U.Ulivo) 1	Fed. Verdi 2	RC 5 PdCI 2	LN 4	AN 9	NPSI(s.u.p.e) 1 US (s.u.p.e) 1 Alt.Sociale 1 Fiamma Tricolore 1	

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 2009-2014

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE	S&D	ADLE	Verts/AL E	ECR	GUE/NGL	EFDD	NI	Total de sièges
IT	35 ●	21 ●	7 ●	0 ●	0 ●	0 ●	9 ●	0 ●	72
	PDL 29 UDC 5 SVP 1	PD 21	IdV-Lista Di Pietro 7				LN 9		

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 2014-2019

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE	S&D	ECR	ADLE	GUE/NGL	Verts/AL E	EFDD	NI	Total de sièges
IT	17 ●	31 ●	0 ●	0 ●	3 ●	0 ●	17 ●	5 ●	73
	FI 13 NCD 2 SVP 1 UDC 1	PD 31			L'Altra Europa – Con Tsipras 3		M5S 17	LN 5	

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 2019-2024

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE	S&D	ECR	Renew Europe	GUE/NGL	Verts/AL E	ID	NI	Total de sièges
IT	7 ●	19 ●	5 ●	0 ●	0 ●	0 ●	28 ●	14 ●	73
	FI SVP	PD 19	FDI 5				LN 28	M5S 14	
	1								

- Electoral results by year and by parties for the European Election in France since 1994 to 2019.

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 1994-1999

Session constitutive

Pays	PSE	PPE	ELDR	GUE	FE	RDE	V	ARE	EDN	NI	Total de sièges
FR	15 ●	13 ●	1 ●	7 ●	0 ●	14 ●	0 ●	13 ●	13 ●	11 ●	87
	PS 14 app. PS 1	UDF-PR 4 UDF- CDS 4 UDF- Clubs 2 UDF-AD 1 UDF- Rad. 1 PSD 1	UDF- Rad. 1	PCF 7		RPR 14		MRG 7 Energie Rad. 6	L'autre EU 11 UDF-PR 1 RPR 1	FN 11	

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 1999-2004

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE-DE	PSE	ELDR	Verts/AL E	GUE/NG L	UEN	TDI	EDD	NI	Total de sièges
FR	20 ●	22 ●	0 ●	9 ●	11 ●	13 ●	5 ●	6 ●	1 ●	87
	UDF 9	PS 18		VERTS 9	LO/LCR 5	RPFIE 13	FN 5	CPNT 6	Ind 1	
	RPR 4	PRG 2			PCF 4					
	DL 4	MDC 2			Ind 2					
	SC 2									
	GE 1									

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 2004-2009

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE-DE	PSE	ALDE	Verts/AL E	GUE/NGL	IND/DEM	UEN	NI	Total de sièges
FR	17 ●	31 ●	11 ●	6 ●	3 ●	3 ●	0 ●	7 ●	78
	UMP 17	PS 31	UDF 11	Verts 6	PCF 2	MPF 3		FN 7	
					PCR 1				

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 2009-2014

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE	S&D	ADLE	Verts/AL E	ECR	GUE/NGL	EFD	NI	Total de sièges
FR	29 ●	14 ●	6 ●	14 ●	0 ●	5 ●	1 ●	3 ●	72
	UMP 26	PS 14	MoDem 6	Europe Écologie 14		PCF 2	MPF 1	FN 3	
	NC 2					PG 1			
	GM 1					MC. Vergiat (Ind) 1			
						PCR 1			

Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 2014-2019

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE	S&D	ECR	ADLE	GUE/NGL	Verts/AL E	EFDD	NI	Total de sièges
FR	20 ●	13 ●	0 ●	7 ●	4 ●	6 ●	1 ●	23 ●	74
	UMP 20	PS - PRG 13		UDI/Mode m 6 UDI 1	UOM 1 PCF 1 PG 1 FG 1	Europe Ecologie 6	Ind. 1	FN 23	
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Répartition par parti national et par groupe politique: 2019-2024

Session constitutive

Pays	PPE	S&D	ECR	Renew Europe	GUE/NGL	Verts/AL E	ID	NI	Total de sièges
FR	8 ●	5 ●	0 ●	21 ●	6 ●	12 ●	22 ●	0 ●	74
	LR 8	Coal (PS + RDG + PP + N) 5		Coal (LREM + MoDem + A + MRSL) 21	FI 6	EELV 12	RN 22		
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X. SUMMARY

Through this work, we wanted to observe the electoral behaviour in the European elections since 1994, the year of the fourth election of the European Parliament, until the last elections in May 2019. In order to understand and demonstrate that the last six European elections held in Italy and France, for the Northern League and the National Front respectively, have the characteristics that define the model of second-order elections, we carried out a research study. Indeed, after defining the various terms useful to our research, namely political parties, structuralism, the extreme right, second-order elections, the European Parliament and European elections, we established a state of the art allowing us to situate these terms and the issues and themes in which they evolve. The aim of this state of the art is to analyse and observe the stage of the subject studied in the scientific literature and to understand the different points of view and approaches proposed in the scientific world. Once this state of the art was done, we then put the studied theories into practice and tried to answer our research question: can we confirm or deny that the European election from 1994 to 2019 included within the parties the Northern League and the National Front are considered as second-order elections?

To answer this question, we first established the history of the two parties under study and the ideologies and institutional behaviours associated with them as explained above. We then analysed the electoral results of each European election for each party. Finally, we compared these results, produced as a result of our analysis, to the constituent characteristics of the second-order election model. Through this comparative analysis, we have demonstrated that, for most of the criteria and elections studied, these elections could indeed be described as second-order elections.

Before offering a summary of this analysis, it is important to stress that, although our study concluded that these elections are second-order elections, it is not exhaustive and does not offer a unique solution and that other criteria must be taken into account as well to fully confirm or refute the second-order model. We will therefore proceed as follows to provide a concise and comprehensive summary: the first part contains the definitions of each term and outlines the important points relating to them, the second part summarises the state of the art

and finally, the third part provides a summary of the empirical analysis of the data.

We will now look at the definition of the concepts studied. First of all, let us talk about structuralism. Structuralism is a widespread and active field of study. The most widespread type of definition remains the descriptive one, which tends to give priority to the terms *structure* and *structuralism* and tries to understand the trivialisation of their use in the field of the Human and Social Sciences during the 1950s and 1960s. Structuralism is a paradigm that considers not institutions but socio-economic structures. Indeed, with this paradigm, institutions are secondary, and the central object of study of structuralism is constituted by the social processes arising from fundamental and often unconscious structures. The aim of structuralism is therefore to highlight these unconscious structures in order to explain certain political phenomenon. The methods that will be privileged to put structuralism into practice are direct observation, comparison, and qualitative methods. Analyses, based on structuralism, are carried out at a macro level. So, in this paperwork, we will study the structures at a national and supranational level. Within structuralism, there is a variety of theories on which these fundamental structures are based on.

After defining the structuralism, the simple way with the help of the dictionary, we tried to define it under the prism of Human, Social and Political Sciences. So, we have seen that several approaches, definitions and fields of study were attributed to it. In a study lead by Alexis Cartonnet for example, he and several authors propose that the preliminary operation of structuralism is a « cutting up of units. »¹⁸⁴. Indeed, the author proposes three axioms to explain this concept of « cut-up units ». we can say that the paradigm of structuralism articulates the elements housed in a spatial set (units) whose action is based on a system of permutation and this corresponds to the three axioms: axiom of relation, axiom of position and axiom of permutation.

Political party is defined as « a meeting of men who profess the same political doctrine ». ¹⁸⁵ But, this definition is from Benjamin Constant in 1816

¹⁸⁴ BARTHES, R., *Essais critiques*, ouvr. cité, p. 224. In CARTONNET, Alexis, « Structuralisme et néoréalisme dans le champ des relations internationales. Le cas de Kenneth Waltz », *Astérion*, septembre 2011, 1p.

¹⁸⁵ DREYFUS, Françoise (dir.), « Nouveaux partis, nouveaux enjeux », Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2000, p58.

and we have seen that definitions of the term have changed considerably and that it is not possible to come up with a single definition for all. These will differ due to many elements such as the approach used, the framework in which it evolves, the type of party, the point of view chosen, the authors and researchers, etc. Again, before looking at the scientific literature produced on the subject, we proposed two classic dictionary definitions. However, we will focus on finding a definition of the concept from the perspective of Political Sciences and International Relations. The function of a party is to assume governmental representation and to make political decisions in order to control and govern the future of a society. The party is thus an actor in the decision-making process of a nation.¹⁸⁶ The most commonly used definition is the one provided by philosophers Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner in 1966, that consider the political party as a sustainable organisation whose political life expectancy is longer than that of its leaders. Several authors as Edmund Burke or Lipset and Rokkan have been given their definition regarding their own point of view. In addition, it is important to emphasise that public policy-making is not the only objective of parties. Indeed, parties are more complex organisations through which members, supporters, and activists, may have different interests. It is therefore necessary to take into account, when asking the question of what a political party is, the premises of parties as a set of specific repertoires of action, to keep involving the past and the limits to the frontier between what is and what is not a party. While some authors, such as Weber, insist on the voluntary dimension of party affiliation and adherence, others, such as George Lavau, propose several traditions in order to define this concept. He thus highlights the Christian tradition, the trade unionist tradition, the Marxist ideological tradition and finally the political commitment tradition. Thus, beyond considering the party as a structure allowing its members to obtain a share of power and to have the possibility, via this structure, of defending personal or common interests, it is also to perceive the party as a place for the expression and opposition of ideas rather than as a means of gaining power. The modern political party is no longer a « simple group that professes the same political ideology » neither a « power-hungry organisation ». In fact, the modern party in a representative regime plays

¹⁸⁶ SEILER, Daniel-Louis, « la politique comparée », Paris, Armand Colin, « Collection U », 1982, p45.

an important structural role and legitimises the election process as well as the constitution of a government. It is therefore a particularly powerful institution in democratic and non-democratic regimes, as it is created by the coercive authority of the State. To conclude this part and in order to link this aspect of our work to the functioning and practice of structuralism, it is important to stress that in the context of a comparative study of political parties, we will limit ourselves almost exclusively to describing the influence of these doctrines on the structures studied. Furthermore, it is important, in a research paper where our case study is political parties, to understand what a party is and what its political aspects and dynamics are.

The next concept that is defined in our work is the far-right. Indeed, this is the key point of this analysis because beyond understanding what it is and what it implies, it is the parties resulting from this categorisation that we will study in our work. The term far-right is used to define three types of movements: groups that sit, when elected, on the extreme right of the hemicycle; movements qualified as reactionary according to the Marxist vision of the term, supposedly in favour of a return to the old order; and finally, a group of extremists and sometimes violent identity-based groupings. It is then necessary to distinguish the trends and philosophical currents related to this category. When we look at history in general, and the history of Europe in particular, we can see that it is from the beginning of the 20th century onwards that extreme right-wing movements and ideologies emerge in an intense way. After fading away for a while after the Second World War, we are witnessing a return of the far-right in Europe that is increasingly marked. As a matter of fact, some may have thought the Second World War would have eradicated or, at least, tackled the power of radical right parties, this is actually not verified in practice. In order to define it correctly, we can highlight some general criteria. As a non-exhaustive list, we can cite anti-parliamentarianism, authoritarianism and a race-based doctrine, an organisation of society on the basis of individuals inequality, strong nationalism refusing to recognise the rights of foreigners on its territory and therefore privileging blood law over soil law. But these terms will vary from authors, analyses, and theories. With regard to the « classic » ideologies of this type of party, we can mention the ideological affiliation with fascist regimes, the use of more moderate terms and a mutation of its basic electorate that was initially the

precarious social class, and a broader opening to different social classes. There are several labels and words used to refer to the far-right. From « extreme right » passing through « far-right » onto « populist radical right », these terms are used randomly and often indiscriminately to refer to the same type of organisation, such as the National Front and the Northern League. They have been widely used in political science research and are still used by many experts of this field of analysis. Various authors have also proposed terms and concepts to define the extreme right such as the cult of the leader and the single party that no longer meets the expectations of individualistic civil society or the definition proposed by Anne-Marie Duranton who says that the radical right are « cultures of an authoritarian (anti-egalitarian), hierarchical, anti- or a-rationalist type.»¹⁸⁷ Finally, a consensus was reached, and we will now consider these terms to belong to one and unique family, since the most important common denominator is that these structures have an ethno-nationalist vision of society and tend to reject any dissent or minority. Other criteria for characterising extreme right-wing parties are provided by Béatrice Giblin in her article *Extrême droite en Europe: une analyse géopolitique*. She adds, to those already listed and taken up in our work, that these types of parties are anti-Semitic, oppose the secularism of the State, defend Western Christianity and oppose abortion and homosexuality.¹⁸⁸ It is therefore clear that defining exactly what the extreme right is not an easy task, and that there are such diverse views, aspects, and categorisations that it is simply not possible to find a single definition. It is also quite difficult to bring together all the criteria proposed, in this work or more widely in the scientific literature on the subject, in order to offer a complete definition. To continue this work, we will define the extreme right as more than an ideology, it is a particular form of organisation, which obtains most of its success through the ballot box and whose general themes are anti-parliamentarianism, rejection of foreigners and therefore of anti-migration policies, as well as a preference for direct democracy as a substitute for representative democracy, but often the desire for a more authoritarian regime.

¹⁸⁷ REMOND, René, « Les droites aujourd'hui », 2005, p.32, in « Comptes rendus », *Revue historique*, Paris, Audibert, 2006, volume 2, n° 638, pp.423-506.

¹⁸⁸ GIBLIN, Béatrice, « Extrême droite en Europe : une analyse géopolitique », *Hérodote*, janvier 2012, n° 144, p. 3-17.

When it comes to defining what the European Parliament is and how its elections work, we take as a basis the definition given by the European Union itself. The European Parliament is « an important forum for political debate and decision-making at the EU level »¹⁸⁹. The European Parliament, in place since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) formally created by the Treaty of Paris in 1951, has taken its current form after several advances and modifications during a wide period on what constitutes the European Union that we know today. Indeed, first established as a « common assembly » in 1952, it will become the European parliamentary assembly in 1957 with the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC). It will then take the name of European Parliament in 1962 for, at the time, consultation only.¹⁹⁰ As said by Simon Hix « turning to the bigger picture, there has been a dramatic increase in the power of the European Parliament in the last two decades »¹⁹¹. Indeed, the Parliament has obtained a lot of competencies. From that time on, the European Parliament has acquired legislative and budgetary competences following the various modifications of the European treaties. It is in fact the only European power to be directly elected by the European citizens and electoral core. This parameter should logically make the European elections an important issue and elections of the first order, but this aspect is not reflected. The Parliament has therefore a legislative function, which enables it to draw up proposals for new legislations. Through its budgetary powers, the European Parliament has the opportunity to adopt the entire annual EU budget, in close cooperation with the Council. Finally, the European Parliament has democratic control over many of the institutions that make up the EU, including the European Council, the Council of the EU, the Commission and the Court of Justice. The European elections of the European Parliament have been held, every five years, since 1979 at a multinational level. These elections are held on the basis of universal suffrage, but above all, on the basis of degressive proportional representation, and this has been this case since 1999.

¹⁸⁹ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, « Europarl », website of the European Parliament, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en> (page consulted on the august 17, 2021)

¹⁹⁰ GOBIN, Corinne, « L'Union européenne, la recomposition conservatrice », dans Tony Andréani et Michel Vakaloulis (dir), *Refaire la politique*, Paris, Syllepse, 2002, p.103-116.

¹⁹¹ HIX, Simon, and MARSH, Michael, « Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections », *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2007, p507.

Second-order elections are our second most important concept on this thesis. Indeed, appearing at the same time as the first elections to the European Parliament, second-order elections were defined as such to qualify mainly European elections. Even if this concept has since been applied to other levels of elections such as regional elections, as we will see in our analysis, studies on the subject are mainly focused on supranational elections. In order to define this term as precisely as possible, and to explore its aspects and hypotheses in our state of the art, we will outline the different characteristics applied to and by this theory in the scientific literature. The term « second-order », and the concept associated with it, emerged in the 1980s through the work of Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt. The studies on the second-order election model arose from the analysis of the electoral results of the first European elections in 1979. When Reif and Schmitt looked at these results, they found that they did not reflect the anticipated basic « balance » of forces within the European institutions. The authors then realised that the analysis of the European election results cannot be done on its own and must be used and linked with the elections at National level. The nature of European second-order elections is therefore based on three empirical effects: voter turnout is lower during these elections compared to national elections, the parties in power at the time of the European elections have a tendency to lose votes compared to the previous national election, and even if the outcome of the European elections has no direct impact on the composition and functioning of the national government, the vote can be used to influence the next national election or the policies of the current governments.¹⁹² The extent of the effects of turnout and other changes in voting behaviours will depend on the timing of these elections in relation to the national electoral cycle. We can therefore define it as the following way: it is a model of electoral analysis that is based on several specific constituent criteria which are the turnout rate, an often-inverse result between the national election and the subsequent European election, the timing of the European elections and, finally, the motivation for voting.

¹⁹² SAUGER, Nicolas, « Élections de second ordre et responsabilité électorale dans un système de gouvernance à niveaux multiples », *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, 2015, vol.53, n°1, pp. 21-47.

Regarding our state-of-the-art part, we focused on the structuralism approach as well as on the second-order election model. As these are the two main themes of our research, it was important to situate them within the literature. Moreover, we will see that these two elements link all the thermals that we have previously defined.

Beyond defining the term *structuralism* as a method of studying social behaviours (such as language and its practice) and how these behaviours shape the structure in which they take place, we will comb through the literature on the subject and attempt to understand, through the research and scholarly analysis produced, what structuralism is in the social sciences and how and why it is useful for our current research on the rise of far-right parties at the European level. We will therefore discuss several authors and scientists who have studied the issue and examine the use of this paradigm in social and political sciences. This concept has been studied and defined in various fields such as ethnology (study of human groups), linguistics or anthropology and has been developed strongly after the Second World War. One of the precursors, Claude Lévi-Strauss, through his work on the analysis of incest in male-female relations among the Amazonian peoples, define structuralism as follows: « It is a word that has been used in so many ways, if you like, that I myself no longer dare use it. Because it was imagined that it was a great novelty, whereas it is not at all. It is simply an effort to introduce into what is wrongly called the human sciences, the social sciences, a little more rigour than there was previously. »¹⁹³ He seeks to put Ferdinand De Saussure's structural linguistics (General Linguistics Course) into practice in the field of anthropology. To take his example of the family, he considers it, traditionally speaking, as the fundamental object of his structural analysis, but above all by considering this subject as an autonomous unit composed of its members. The distant members of the family are then considered as secondary. It is from the 19th century onwards, after the Second World War as we mentioned above, that this concept will really impose itself and rise to the forefront of the social and political sciences with the help of recognised theorists such as Marx, Weber, Lipset and Rokkan, Durkheim or Spencer or Kenneth Waltz. Durkheim devoted a sociological study to this term. For him, society

¹⁹³ PIVOT, Bernard, « Apostrophes : Claude Levi-Strauss « le structuralisme » », 4 mai 1984, Ina culture, 2012.

constitutes a whole that is implacable to the sum of its units, and it is on this basis that the sociological discipline of structuralism will develop. Plus, it can be seen that the term structuralist was first used in the field of psychology with the aim of countering functional psychology. However, the real starting point of the research and studies produced on this paradigm comes from the modern evolution of linguistics. It was in this field that Saussure carried out his research. As explained in the theoretical framework, three general axioms have been outlined (relation, position and permutation) but the authors Alexis Cartonnet and François Dosse propose to add three specific axioms, namely anarchy, differentiation and distribution, as well as three points of debate, namely the hegemony of linguistics and semiology (the science that studies the system of signs in linguistics), the rivalry between sociology and the scientific discipline of mathematics, and finally the assumption that there is a conservative aspect of the structural method. Moreover, several scientific articles that concern the analysis of the support of far-right parties in Western Europe use structural conflicts as point of start. Structuralism is being an important theoretical basis to the comprehension of such movements, it is widely interesting to apply this model of theory in our analysis concerning also far-right parties. Finally, if we go deeper in what is with regards to our two political parties studied here, the National Front and the Northern League, several theoretical resources are already in our possession in the present literature. Indeed, on the French side, when analyzing the identity crisis, Sylvain Crépon claims the National Front has gone through between 1972 and 2015, then, he details all internal procedures on the designation of the head of parties. On the Italian side, the notoriety and importance of the literature revolving on Berlusconi's party is not to be ignored. Indeed, this party gives us a first perfect example of the « process of symbolic interaction between the people and the State »¹⁹⁴. It is thus clear that structuralism is not only a method for analysing abstract and unconscious phenomena in the human sciences, but that it is above all a practical method that takes into account all the given sets and systems that are produced and observable. Furthermore, we should not overlook the fact that the objects studied through the prism of structuralism are subject to different forces at the horizontal

¹⁹⁴ ARANGO ERAZO, Ana Maria, « The construction of Italy's National-State Identity between 2008 – 2014. », mémoire de maitrise, University Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario, 2017.

and vertical levels, which in our case of study are respectively the transnational movements as well as the relations between parties and regional movements, and the very evolution of these parties at the national level.

We will therefore see, through this state of the art, how second-order elections are perceived but especially how they are used to analyse electoral results. This literature will therefore allow us to see whether or not there is a correlation between the electoral results of the National Front party in France and the Northern League in Italy in the last 6 European elections (from 1994 to 2019) and the second-order election model. Beyond taking into account the work of Reif and Schmitt, we will look at some authors who have proposed to confirm this model of elections or to put forward new avenues of actions. First of all, we have been able to explain that there is a feature that implies a cyclical theory of elections. It assumes that the timing of the European election in the national electoral cycle would determine the importance of the consequences on its outcomes. Then, there is another criterion which is likely to attract particular attention in our case analysis in this dissertation, is the sanction vote. Indeed, regardless of the timing of the election, voters may decide to cast a vote that expresses their dissatisfaction with the party or government in power in the State. This may be in relation to their economic or social policies, or in relation to their programme, or to affirm their political preferences. There is also the theory of « retrospective voting », proposed by Nicolas Sauger, which is built on the idea that annual results and outcomes matter in voting decisions. One of the problems with this second-order election approach, as expressed by Schakel and Jeffery, is that despite the fact that this theory has been greatly developed and refined over time, it remains the dominant approach when it comes to analysing European Parliament elections as the only ones with explanatory power. However, the concern arises when we transfer a nationalised concept for the study of European elections to the study of regional elections. There is therefore a risk of assuming that all forms of elections are subordinated to national politics and that the national level is the only one that matters.¹⁹⁵ Thanks to this state of the literature on the theory of second-order elections, we were able to note that beyond the verification and confirmation of the major criteria that define what a

¹⁹⁵ SCHAKEL, Arjan H., JEFFERY, Charlie, pp. 323-34.

second-order election is, some fewer classic hypotheses have been brought up and verified or not. During our case analysis, we will have to remain vigilant about the aspects taken into account and the results studied.

The final part of this summary is about the analysis of electoral results during the European election of the two parties studied. We will therefore expose a brief summary of the history of the parties and then proceed to the analysis and see whether the theory is applicable or not.

Named the National Front (NF), or more correctly *le Front National pour l'Unité Française*, until 2018, this far-right French political party was officially founded in October 1972 as an initiative launched in particular by *l'Ordre Nouveau* (New Order – NO) (a nationalist and far-right movement of the late 1960s in France) and was chaired by Jean-Marie Le Pen until 2011. The presidency was taken over by his daughter in 2011, Marine Le Pen, who still holds it today. This party was born from the idea of creating a « gathering of the national right » bringing together militants from Petainist or neo-Nazi movements with the aim of obtaining votes in the 1973 national legislative elections. The NO was the main extreme right-wing movement in France after the Second World War. The advent and continuity of the National Front's existence can be summarised, as proposed by Pascal Delwitte in his book « Le Front National, mutations de l'extrême-droite française », in four phases. The first one corresponds to the period between the birth of the party and its first electoral breakthrough in the 1983 municipal elections, the second, which laid the foundations and ensured the party's constancy, ended with its split in December 1998 with the « Mégret affair », the third was marked by the weakening of the NF despite the arrival of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the second round of the 2002 presidential elections, and finally the fourth, marked by the succession of Marine Le Pen to the presidency of the party, and the party's rise in the opinion polls, which has been gradual but sure.¹⁹⁶ We will then be able to observe and tell the story of the party and its hero through a cross-sectional

¹⁹⁶ DELWITTE, Pascal, *Le Front National : mutations de l'extrême droite française*, Bruxelles, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2012, p11.

analysis of national and European electoral results from 1973 to the 2019 elections.

The Northern League has been created and developed in a specific context as there were several differences between the North and the South of the country that contributed to shape the party. Officially called « *Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania* », the Northern League (NL) is an Italian party founded in 1989 (but becoming an official party in 1991) by Umberto Bossi. Originally, the party used to campaign for the independence of Padania, the Northern and continental part of the country, but has now changed its position and is campaigning, among other things, for fiscal federalism. Indeed, the independence of the Northern regions and especially their self-determination is a struggle that has gone back and forth in the party's objectives. We will see later in this section some of the reasons why this movement militated for their independence. Their case can be compared to that of Catalonia or Flanders, although there are major differences. A number of works and research on the history of the League attribute part of its success to the protest cycles of the Italian political system. And from this perspective, it remains difficult to find many studies and elements of analysis on the organisation and functioning of the party. Moreover, given that its trajectory has not been very linear so far and that it has undergone various structural and ideological changes throughout its existence, it is difficult to clearly define and categorise this party. The League is therefore a party that is mostly described as far-right, having several characteristics that are indeed derived from those of far-right parties, however, some researchers tend to say that it has more of a populist aspect (defined in the dictionary as "an ideology and political movement advocating a path towards socialism; ideology of some nationalist movements).

It is a rather small party, if we compare it to the National Front in particular, but it does not give up because it continues to maintain and increase its electorate, whether at national or European level.

Having seen the history and internal functioning of the parties studied, as well as having demonstrated that these two parties can be categorized as far-right parties. In addition, having seen a brief overview of their progress and electoral course through their existence, we will now proceed to the analysis of

the results obtained in the last six European elections, namely those of 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019. We have made a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the votes obtained in percentages and seats, especially in the national and European elections of the mentioned period, and then we have made a comparative analysis between the results of these two parties. To conclude this analysis, we have put in practice the theory of second-order elections and, with the help of the criteria defining it, we have concluded that all the European elections studied are effectively second-order elections. So, first of all, we have compared the different results of the Northern League (NL) and the National Front (NF) and we have noticed that the NL had two major scores in 2009 with 10,2% and in 2019 with 34,26%. The NF has more than two scores as it had results of more than 10% of votes for the 1994, 2014 and 2019's elections. Indeed, with almost 25% for the 2014's elections and more than 23% for the 2019's one, this party had significant scores. Then, we have proceeded to an analyse, year by year, of the results and we have compared them to the national results and used different literatures about the period mentioned. We also have added several aspects that influenced the scrutiny as the implementation of European Treaties and dissidence and movements within each party. Once we pointed out the above-mentioned trends in the political lifetime of both parties, we were able to give a greater interest to the second-order election dimension of these elections. The four criteria that have been used to qualify elections as such are further verified empirically. We begin by using the first, by applying the low voter turnout criterion on the one hand and the timing of the European elections compared to the national elections on the other hand to check the electoral cycle criterion. Finally, we have analysed the last two criteria together, namely the sanction vote and the splintering of the political spectrum and families, by analysing the timing of the national elections in relation to the European elections. If the latter take place just before national elections, then the European vote is often used by voters to send a message to the outgoing or future government.

To conclude this resume of our empirical work, it is possible to now say, with only little exceptions that are mentioned when you go deeper in our analysis, that the six elections analysed all confirm, almost completely, that they are of

the second-order election register. After this analysis, which we hope was as complete as possible, can we then say that the European elections that took place between 1994 and 2019 for the Northern League parties in Italy and for the National Front in France are second-rate elections? Even if some exceptions were worth mentioning when concluding our different analysis, taking into account the importance of qualitative and quantitative data used, we can still very much answer our initial question with a yes. Our hypothesis is verified, the elections deeply analysed, we can clearly state the European elections that took place between 1994 and 2019 can be qualified as being second-order ones through the lenses of the Northern League and National Front results. By qualifying these elections as such, this also gives us a wider view on the far-right movements successes in Europe, most precisely in France and Italy.